

Testimony before the Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs  
Committee

February 19, 2020

In **SUPPORT** of S.B. 478: Food Procurement – GHG Emissions (Senator Lam)

Presented by Sujatha Bergen, NRDC

Dear Honorable Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council and our thousands of members and supporters in Maryland, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S.B. 478 to establish a target of reducing Maryland's GHG emissions from food purchases by 25% by 2030. This would be accomplished by reducing food waste and shifting to more climate-friendly menus in our public institutions.

The mission of the Natural Resources Council is to work to ensure the rights of all people to the air, the water and the wild. No issue is more central to this mandate than global warming, which poses a profound threat to our planet and the people that depend on its resources.

According to the United Nations, emissions from livestock production are responsible for approximately 15 percent of global climate pollution, more than the entire transportation sector. Furthermore, research shows that we cannot meet the Paris Accord targets without shifting our diets toward foods with a smaller greenhouse gas footprint. This legislation recognizes that the state's own food procurement is an impactful way to reduce emissions associated with food consumption.

There is a precedent in Maryland for using procurement to support our environmental and social values. State agencies give preference to recycled paper, compost on public lands, locally grown foods, and American made goods, for example. This legislation builds on that framework by asking agencies and state universities to report on the volume of carbon-intensive foods they are purchasing and begin working toward voluntary reductions.

In conclusion, S.B. 478 is a critical step toward addressing Maryland's food-related emissions. Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully urge a favorable report.