



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 351

DATE: February 11, 2020

SPONSOR: Senator Gallion, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey (leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: OPPOSE (Department of Health and Human Services)

Agriculture – Farmers Markets – Advertising, Labeling, and Enforcement (Farmers Market Integrity Act)

Senate Bill 351 prohibits a person from using the term “farmers market” to describe a market or other sales location unless it is a building, structure, or place used by two or more people for the direct sale of farm and food products to consumers. The bill also prohibits a person from selling farm and food products at a farmers market unless: at least 75% of the products offered by the person were grown or processed by the person or under the supervision of the person; or the farm and food product is (1) purchased directly from another farmer who grew and processed the farm and food product and (2) individually labeled or otherwise identified with the name and location of the farm at which the farm product was grown and processed. A person who violates a provision of the bill is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of at least \$100 and up to \$200 for each violation.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully opposes Senate Bill 351. According to the Montgomery County Food Security Plan, over 70,000 residents are food insecure. Farmers markets are an excellent source of fresh produce and other products for all County residents. By allowing individuals to use SNAP at farmers markets to purchase fresh produce and other healthy food options, farmers markets are particularly beneficial for lower-income residents.

The WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program and the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit both provide a valuable resource for pregnant women and families with babies and young children. Likewise, the WIC/Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program supports lower-income seniors in the community. Montgomery County specifically is home to the Crossroads Farmers Market, which offers an innovative program that matches SNAP benefits up to \$20 per week, along with the Fresh Checks program that matches WIC and senior benefits up to \$20 per week. By restricting farmers markets in the manner prescribed by the bill, there will be fewer markets across the State and fewer Marylanders having access to farmers markets. This is especially problematic for many lower-income residents who rely on farmers markets to supply healthy food options in their communities.

We ask the Committee to issue an unfavorable report.