



March 3, 2020

RE: SUPPORT for H.B. 772 –GHG Emissions from Food Purchases

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity and our 1,481 members in Maryland, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 772 to reduce emissions from food purchasing. By shifting to more plant-forward menus and reducing food waste, the state can reduce its GHG emissions by the 25% target laid out in this bill.

A legitimate path to sustainability means calling for diets lower in animal-based foods and higher in plant-based foods. Doing so would align policies and programs in support of sustainable food that will benefit public health and national food security. As a science-driven national conservation organization, the Center for Biological Diversity is committed to plant-forward menus that are climate-friendly and better for the planet. Wildlife, particularly threatened and endangered species, depend upon fragile ecosystems that are heavily and disproportionately impacted by animal agriculture in our food system.

The food and agriculture sector – largely driven by livestock production – is a major contributor to climate change. Industrially produced animal products are among the most resource-intensive foods, requiring large quantities of land, water, fuel and other energy intensive inputs. Protein rich plant-based foods typically use far fewer resources and are less carbon-intensive and use far less water than beef, and soymilk generates half the emissions of cow's milk.

Numerous studies have found that we cannot meet our global greenhouse gas reduction targets without slashing consumption-based emissions associated with meat and dairy intensive diets. With some of the highest meat consumption rates in the world, the United States must tackle consumption-based emissions from the food sector, including the food served by public institutions. A goal of reducing GHG emissions by 25% by 2030 is aligned with meeting the Paris Agreement target and is a highly achievable target for the state.

HB 772 would also improve health of Marylanders dependent on public institutions for their food. According to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs)*, on average, people are not eating enough vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and other plant-based foods. Meanwhile, Marylanders are suffering from adverse health effects associated with overconsumption of meat, including diabetes, heart disease, and even some forms of cancer. Increased consumption of plant-based foods reduces the risks of developing these costly diet related diseases.

In summary, the State of Maryland has an immense opportunity to make a meaningful impact on public health and the environment by passing HB 772 to increase access to healthy, climate-friendly meals for

people who are in the state's prisons, healthcare facilities, and public universities across the state. Thank you for your consideration of our position, and I respectfully urge your support.

Sincerely,

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