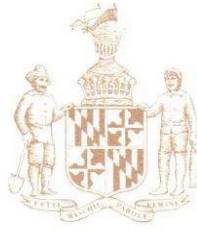


JIM GILCHRIST
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Environment and Transportation
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 219
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3744 · 301-858-3744
800-492-7122 Ext. 3744
Fax 410-841-3057 · 301-858-3057
Jim.Gilchrist@house.state.md.us

The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 3, 2020

HB 772

Maryland Green Purchasing Committee - Food Procurement - Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Good afternoon Chair Pendergrass and members of the committee,

Maryland has been a leader when it comes to addressing climate change, but there's one area where I discovered that the state has been falling short. This bill seeks to address the climate footprint associated with Maryland's food consumption. Globally, food and agriculture accounts for about a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions. The majority of these emissions come from only a handful of foods. Studies have demonstrated that we cannot meet the goals set forth within the Paris Climate Agreement without making changes to our current food consumption choices.

The most direct point of leverage to reduce emissions associated with food consumption is the state's own procurement. Maryland's Green Purchasing Committee has already established a framework for environmentally preferable purchasing by state procurement units. State agencies give preference to recycled paper, compost on public lands, locally grown foods, and American-made goods in their purchasing.

I presented a similar bill to this committee last year that asked DGS to identify a list of carbon-intensive foods, track the purchases of those foods to estimate our GHG emissions, and establish best practices to voluntarily reduce them. Delegate Rosenberg asked whether this could be achieved without legislation, and the answer was yes, so we withdrew the bill and made an agreement with DGS to pursue the project over the interim. We had made good progress, but ultimately MDA intervened and stopped the interim working group addressing this issue, so that's why I'm back with a bill.

This year's bill asks DGS and MDE to establish a methodology for tracking GHG emissions from food purchases, and we anticipate they will use the methodology already established by the World Resources Institute and in use by UMD College Park. This entails tracking all protein foods and grains – not just the most carbon-intensive foods, which the industry took objection to.

This year's bill also sets a specific target of reducing emissions by 25% by 2030. There was some confusion that last year's bill was trying to eliminate meat and dairy in public institutions, and that is not at all the case. So we set a specific 25% reduction target, which is the same target that UMD College Park has already committed to, along with dozens of other institutions across the country.

As state procurement units shift their menus toward more climate-friendly foods – like fruits vegetables, and legumes – they could also save money in addition to lowering their climate footprints and improving health. A pilot analysis conducted at Oakland Unified School district showed that a shift towards low-carbon foods over two years led to significant reductions in their carbon and water footprints while also increasing student meal satisfaction. To put the carbon savings in context, a solar panel installation project that would have achieved the same carbon reduction would have cost \$2.1 million, but instead, the school district actually saved \$42,000. According to DPSCS, the average cost of their meat dinner is \$1.66 compared to \$1.30 for a vegetarian meal, so offering more vegetarian meals could save money that could be reinvested into buying more fresh and local foods for people who are incarcerated.

Once again, this bill simply requires state procurement units to track the greenhouse gas emissions associated with their food purchasing using an already-established methodology, and it offers agencies best practices to begin to achieve a 25% reduction in emissions by 2030. It's a first step toward addressing a major source of climate emissions that builds upon our state's legacy for environmentally preferable purchasing. As such, I urge a favorable report.

Finally, DGS submitted a letter of information that suggests a slightly different implementation and reporting timeline to better align with other reports they produce, an