



Maryland  
Hospital Association

February 26, 2020

To: The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair  
House Health & Government Operations Committee

From: Brian Frazee, Vice President, Government Affairs  
Maryland Hospital Association

Re: Letter of Information- House Bill 819- Health- Health and Wellness Standards- Correctional Facilities and Health Care Facilities

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 61 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 819. Maryland's nonprofit hospitals and health systems care for millions of people each year, treating 2.3 million in emergency departments and delivering more than 67,000 babies. The 108,000 people they employ are [caring for Maryland](#) around-the-clock every day—delivering leading edge, high-quality medical service.

We know that food is medicine. That is why Maryland's hospitals provide plant-based meal options to their patients and visitors in accordance with their dietary needs. MHA works with advocacy organizations, including Friends of the Earth and Healthy Food in Health Care to educate hospitals about these options. MHA recently partnered with these organizations on a webinar to share strategies for serving more plant-based dishes and, more importantly, encouraging patients and staff to eat more fruits and vegetables. It's clear a plant-based diet benefits patients and the general population, improves health, and has environmental benefits. When there are adequate staff resources to prepare plant-based foods from scratch, there can also be cost savings. Our patients, employees, and community benefit from choosing these healthier options.

Maryland hospitals assist patients who have limited access to fresh produce to continue healthy habits at home after discharge. Many hospitals make fresh produce available to patients and communities. That includes "prescriptions" for locally grown vegetables that can be redeemed at hospital-supported farmers markets and Hungry Harvest subscriptions that provide a weekly delivery of a box of fresh fruits and vegetables.

We look forward to learning more and continuing to expand access to healthy food with the advocates of this issue and legislation.

For more information, please contact:  
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