



Senate Bill 539

Income Tax Credit – Food Donation Pilot Program – Extension

Position: Support

Dear Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Fair Farms Maryland in support of Senate Bill 539, sponsored by Senator Guzzone, which extends the Food Donation Pilot Program signed into law by Governor Hogan in 2017.

In 2010, the Maryland Food Bank started the Farm to Food Bank Program to engage farms across the state to provide hungry Marylanders with fresh, local produce. By combining field gleanings, donations, and contract growing, these farms have supplied us with 8,535,088 pounds of high quality, nutritious food to communities in need across the state since the program's inception.

During a time where COVID is front and center in our state, the Farm to Food Bank Program plays an increasingly important role in our hunger-relief efforts. Due to the pandemic's economic impact, our year-over-year statewide distribution efforts between March and December have increased by 89% (51M pounds vs. 27M pounds). More families are turning to the food bank for help, many for the first time. The Maryland Food Bank wants to ensure the food we provide these households is nutrient-rich and supports a healthy immune system to keep those we serve fed and healthy during the pandemic.

We are thankful for our strong partnership with local farms – who continually donate such nutrient-rich, farm-fresh produce to us. Without the Farm to Food Bank Program, many families we serve would not otherwise be able to afford fresh produce. The program is a win for the farm, the food bank, and, most importantly, those who are receiving the food.

The tax incentive program for our farmers has grown over the years since more counties can now participate. Our local farmers are truly a lifeline for keeping the communities we serve fed – and healthy. Further supporting our farmers and the essential role they play in the Maryland Food Bank's hunger-relief efforts is simply the right thing to do.

The Maryland Food Bank proudly stands behind our state's farmers and their work in enhancing Maryland's charitable food distribution stream and keeping our neighbors healthy. We stand behind this bill and we urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report of Senate Bill 539.

Sincerely,

Nancy Smith
Sr. Director of Government Relations