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Budget and Taxation Committee
Capital Budget Subcommittee
Health and Human Services Subcommittee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Vote Yes on Senate Bill 365

Bill Title: Neighborhood Business Development Program - Food Desert Projects - Business Retention

Hearing Date: February 9, 2021 – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Chair: The Honorable Paul Pinsky; Vice Chair: The Honorable Cheryl Kagan

I write to you in **support** of Senate Bill 365. Food deserts and food insecurity continue to be an environmental issue affecting many Marylanders. Traditionally, those impacted are minorities, low-income persons, and those living in urban and rural areas. Living in a food desert increases the risk of weight-related diseases and conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and strokes.

The purpose of the Bill is to expand the objectives of the Neighborhood Business Development Program to include retaining certain businesses in food deserts. Further, it would increase the maximum amount of a certain small loan to \$100,000 to an approved entity for assistance in providing access to healthy food in certain food deserts. Lastly, it would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to forgive a certain loan after a certain number of years if an entity meets loan forgiveness criteria.

In efforts to reduce the amount of food deserts and decrease the level of food insecurities, we hope that you will move for a **favorable** report of Senate Bill 365.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory V. McCray".

Cory V. McCray
State Senator