



## **Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association**

To the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 4, 2021

Senate Bill 723 - Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, Senator Hester, and members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 723 - Maryland Food System Resiliency Council.

MRHA supports this legislation that would establish the goals of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council to address the food insecurity crisis in the State due to the pandemic and ensure longevity in the food procurement and distribution process across the state.

Rural and underserved communities face a host of challenges related to providing accessible and affordable food due to disadvantages in infrastructure, transportation, and economic development. This legislation would provide the necessary inquiries into these communities to determine solutions for ultimately providing sustainable food supply chains to ensure healthy and equitable food options for all rural residents.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MRHA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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