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March 4, 2021

Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 723 - Maryland Food System Resiliency Council – Letter of Information

Dear Chairman Pinsky,

I write to share information on the above referenced Senate bill, which would establish a statewide Food System Resiliency Council. The new Council would meet regularly for at least two years to address the food insecurity crisis in the State. The Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), would have a large role in both the formation and execution of the Council. The Director or his designee would co-chair the Council, and would be responsible for appointing members, per the requirements in the bill.

MEMA has the institutional expertise necessary to take on the roles described in the legislation. As the State agency most accustomed to coordination among other state agencies, MEMA is well-suited for the coordination responsibilities given to the Director. MEMA has successfully led several multiagency coordination efforts for both acute emergencies as well as long-term efforts to reduce disaster risk. Additionally, MEMA has both experienced and institutional expertise in the broader topic of resilience. Food resilience is a subcomponent of that broader topic.

Neither the MEMA Director nor its staff are subject matter experts in food security. In order for this Council to be successful, MEMA would rely on significant input from both other state agencies and public and private organizations. We anticipate, for example, relying on the Governor's Office of Homeland Security, the Department of Agriculture, as well as the Maryland Food Bank give guidance on issues related specifically to food security.

We also believe the Council would benefit from the expertise of local officials, who have more of an “on the ground” perspective of the relevant issues. We would recommend that a member of the Maryland Association of Counties or other local representative should have a place on the Council.

Given the requirements to effectively coordinate the council, meeting schedule, the reporting requirements, and the breadth of the council’s stated goals, we believe this will require additional dedicated resources for this effort. It is our hope that this information will be heavily weighted as the Committee considers SB723.

Thank you for your support of the Maryland Military Department. We would be happy to provide any additional information if required. Please feel free to reach out by e-mail catherine.a.kelly26.nfg@mail.mil or by phone 410-446-5390.

Sincerely,

Catherine A. Kelly

Catherine A. Kelly
Director, Legislative and Government Affairs