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Date: March 29, 2021
To: Members of the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
From: Holly Porter, Executive Director
Re: HB 317 – Maryland Green Purchasing Committee – Food and Beverage Procurement – Greenhouse Gas Emissions - **OPPOSE**

Delmarva Chicken Association or DCA (formerly Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.), the 1,600-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, processing companies and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware **opposes** HB 317 and urges an unfavorable committee report.

HB 317 has the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee, in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Department of Agriculture and Department of General Services developing a methodology to determine greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from food purchased by the state and encourages the reduction of those foods that may appear high in greenhouse gas emissions. The bill also encourages policy changes to achieve the reduction goals of 25% less state procurements of those foods deemed associated with greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The amendments to the bill also specifically calls out the poultry industry, including raising and slaughter.

DCA is extremely concerned that the methodology that is used will not take into the account the strides that have already been made in the chicken industry to reduce our carbon footprint as well as the impact of our local market. Most chicken that is purchased in Maryland is as local as it can get – it is raised in Delmarva, fed by corn and soybeans grown here, processed here and shipped to many stores within our Maryland footprint. Only 10% of Delmarva's chicken produced is exported – the majority is fresh and stays in markets within Baltimore, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, New York City and Boston.

While others may cite greenhouse gas statistics that are global in nature, the reality is that agriculture in the United States makes up only 9%¹ of GHG and in the state of Maryland, it's only 2%². According to the fiscal note, the state would be expending \$64,000-\$83,000 over the next four years to create a methodology that may reduce GHG by 25%, **only** for those state purchases, of a 2% issue in Maryland.

And this bill seems to be in direct conflict to HB831/SB723 – Maryland Food System Resiliency Council and HB14/88/SB985 – Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund that passed in the 2020 session. Maryland should be encouraging more local procurement; not discouraging it by assigning a global number and not taking into account all the significant reductions U.S. agriculture, especially in Maryland, has already made.

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

² <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Air/ClimateChange/Documents/MD%202017%20Periodic%20GHG%20Emissions%20Inventory%20Documentation.pdf>



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The National Chicken Council (a national trade association) shares that producing the same amount of chicken today as 1965 has 50% less impact on the environment, including:

- 75% fewer resources required in poultry production;
- 36% reduced impact of poultry production on greenhouse gas emissions;
- 72% decreased in farmland used in poultry production; and
- 58% decrease in water used in poultry production.³

And due to efficiency in how chickens are bred and raised, the feed conversion rates (ratio of the pound of feed a chicken requires to gain one pound of weight) have decreased by .19 points over 20 years⁴. That means less feed needed, less farmland and less tractor-trailers on the roads. It seems hard to believe that bananas raised in Chile, shipped by cargo ship to Wilmington and distributed by tractor trailers to our state has less greenhouse gas emissions than Delmarva chicken.

Practices on the farm have also created efficiencies in the chicken industry. Delmarva raises nearly the same amount of chickens as we did 20 years ago, but we do it on 48% fewer farms and with 12% less chicken houses. The chicken houses built today are more efficient and require less electric or propane to operate, with many farmers installing solar on their farms. Our farm sizes may be larger, but that also means less tractor trailer trips to various farms to provide birds, feed, propane and processing. Our critics would consider that industrial or factory farming – DCA would contend that is simply sustainable business and has helped in reducing chicken’s carbon footprint.

In a very recent *New York Times* article⁵ it was stated that America’s greenhouse gas emissions plunged more than 10 percent in 2020, with the vast majority from the transportation sector and seven percent from heavy industry. America never stopped eating, and farmers never stopped farming. True gains in greenhouse gas emissions’ reduction should be focused on policies with the most bang for the buck – not in what food purchases the state of Maryland makes.

Agriculture is the number one industry in Maryland with the chicken industry being the largest commodity, bringing more than \$1 billion value to Maryland in 2018 with more than 600 family farms in Maryland in 2020. Our members have concerns with a bill in Maryland that may impact the purchase of chicken, especially by the state itself.

We urge an unfavorable vote on HB 317.

³ <https://www.nationalchickencouncil.org/national-chicken-council-unveils-new-sustainability-resources/>

⁴ <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=ea25550135f04151bd8bee3c247188b2>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/12/climate/2020-greenhouse-gas-emissions.html>



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Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at porter@dcachicken.com or 302-222-4069 or Nick Manis, Manis Canning & Associates, 410-263-7882.