



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 4, 2021**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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**SB0723: FAVORABLE
Maryland Food System Resiliency Council**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0723 Maryland Food System Resiliency Council** as a comprehensive look at the issue of food insecurity and the role school systems play in feeding youth across the State.

SB0723/HB0831 creates a statewide Food System Resiliency Council made up of varied stakeholders related to food access and services, including a representative of local public school systems. The goals of the council include (I) To address the food insecurity crisis resulting from the COVID-10 pandemic and resulting economic crisis; (II) To develop, on or before November 1, 2021, equity and sustainability recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the food system; (III) To expand the impact of existing Food Council organizations; (IV) To develop, on or before November 1, 2021, a strategic plan to increase the production and procurement of Maryland certified food. Specific to school systems, two subgoals of the above include (A) Exploring the role of and potential for the Federal Community Eligibility Provision to ensure all students in the State are fed; and (B) Making recommendations to the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland General Assembly to implement such findings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the immense need for greater collaboration around the issue of food availability and sustainability. The Howard County Public School System's Food and Nutrition Service workers have served over 4 million free grab-and-go meals since schools first closed in March 2020. The Board supports the intent of this bill to take a closer look at the role of public food services and the impact coordinated efforts could have on students, as well as the State as a whole.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0723 from this Committee, and thank local Howard County Senator Katie Fry Hester for sponsoring this important bill.