

The University of Maryland Student Government Association

Testimony for HB317

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Wednesday, Mar. 31, 2021

Maryland Green Purchasing Committee - Food and Beverage Procurement - Greenhouse Gas Emissions

POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Amanda Miller and I am a student at the University of Maryland, College Park, studying Government and Politics and Sustainability. I'd like to thank Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 317, and to Delegate Gilchrist for introducing this piece of legislation, which will take a bold step towards reducing the state's carbon footprint.

Climate change is the greatest crisis humanity has ever faced. It is already impacting millions of people around the world. Over the past five years, the United States alone has experienced 500 billion dollars in losses from climate related disasters. According to multiple studies, we have less than ten years left to turn things around, meaning we must start now.

Agriculture is responsible for a third of global emissions, largely due to deforestation and factory farming. In 2019, the University of Maryland, College Park, committed to a greenhouse gas reduction goal of 25% by 2030. Our university implemented a peer-reviewed methodology to track these emissions reductions over time, which the university has been able to accomplish with existing staffing resources. Our carbon footprint baseline revealed that the food in our dining halls is responsible for 52,856 tons of carbon dioxide. To combat this, the university's dining services have begun composting, have been using reusable bags as we've shifted to take out during the pandemic, and we were the first school in the world to take the Cool Food Pledge, a commitment to sustainable dining practices. Our school is a leader on this front, but there is so much more that can be done.

Reducing these emissions by 25%, as this bill calls for, will be the equivalent to removing 2,855 cars off the road in Maryland. HB 317 would ensure that this critical tracking continues over time and that other universities follow suit by baselining their carbon emissions from food purchasing.

Reducing food-related emissions is a vital component to seriously addressing the climate crisis. This bill is a step toward reducing a major part of the state's carbon footprint that has not yet been addressed. We should all do our part in protecting the legacy of this world that we are privileged to call our home. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify. I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Amanda Miller, *UMD SGA Sustainability Committee*

Ben Baitman, *Director of Government Affairs*

Dan Alpert, *Student Body President*