



The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 31, 2021

HB 317

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

Good afternoon Chair Pinsky and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill before you today. This is a previously introduced bill that reflects a compromise created by stakeholders that passed the House just before the legislature adjourned early due to the pandemic.

Maryland has been a leader when it comes to addressing climate change, but there's one area where we discovered that the state has been falling short. This bill seeks to address the climate footprint associated with Maryland's food consumption. Globally, food and agriculture accounts for about a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions. Studies have demonstrated that we cannot meet the goals set forth within the Paris Climate Agreement without making changes to our current food consumption choices and reducing food waste.

The most direct point of leverage to reduce emissions associated with food consumption is the state's own procurement. Maryland's Green Purchasing Committee has already established a framework for environmentally preferable purchasing by state procurement units. State agencies give preference to recycled paper, compost on public lands, locally grown foods, and American-made goods in their purchasing.

The bill asks the Department of General Services, Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Environment to work with stakeholders to establish a methodology for tracking greenhouse gas emissions from food purchases over the next year and a half. There are already established methodologies out there for them to consider and adopt. The bill sets a specific target of reducing emissions by 25% by 2030, which is in line with meeting the Paris Agreement target.

As state procurement units shift their menus toward more climate-friendly foods – like fruits, vegetables, and legumes – they could save money in addition to lowering their climate footprints and improving health. A pilot analysis conducted at Oakland Unified School district showed that a shift towards low- carbon foods over two years led to significant reductions in their carbon and water footprints while also increasing student meal satisfaction. To put the carbon savings in context, a solar panel installation project that would have achieved the same carbon reduction would have cost \$2.1 million, but instead, the school district actually saved \$42,000. According to DPSCS, the average cost of their meat dinner is \$1.66 compared to \$1.30 for a vegetarian meal, so offering more vegetarian meals could save money that could be reinvested into buying more fresh and local foods for people who are incarcerated.

This bill is a first step toward addressing a major source of climate emissions that builds upon our state's legacy for environmentally preferable purchasing, and it represents a compromise agreed to by all parties last session. As such, I urge a favorable report.