



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters

Baltimore Jewish
Council

Catholic Charities

Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council

Church of the Brethren

Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland

Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County

Jewish Community
Relations Council of
Greater Washington

Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland

Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging

Maryland Catholic
Conference

Mental Health
Association of Maryland

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter

Presbytery of Baltimore

The Coordinating
Center

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HB 831

Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 17, 2021

Support

MSCAN is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing and care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income senior citizens.

MSCAN supports HB 831, which establishes the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency. The Council will address food insecurities in the State due to the COVID-19 pandemic, develop recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the food system, and develop a plan to increase the production and procurement of Maryland certified food.

COVID-19 has amplified food insecurity in Maryland. When the pandemic began, Maryland received nearly 150,000 SNAP benefit applications, a 400% increase, in April 2020 as compared to March.¹ By June 2020, Maryland acquired over 800,000 SNAP participants.² There is a need now more than ever to address food insecurity in Maryland due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of our seniors are on fixed incomes and struggle with meeting their basic needs. Nearly one in five low-income seniors in Maryland struggles with hunger, resulting in Maryland having the 8th highest food insecurity rate among low-income seniors.³ Unfortunately, seniors are more likely to suffer from mental and physical health issues when they are food insecure. Food insecure seniors are over 5 times more likely to suffer from depression and almost 2 times as likely to be diabetic.

HB 831 will reduce food insecurity by creating a statewide Food System Resiliency Council. Local jurisdictions in Maryland, like Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, have already created their own "food councils" that have made positive differences in their communities. For instance, the Montgomery County Food Council established a Senior SNAP Program where volunteers to visit senior residences and centers throughout the county to assist older Americans in applying for SNAP. They are able to identify gaps in services, the best ways to allocate resources, and assist local providers. Amplifying this critical work by creating a statewide council would allow Maryland to respond to our current public health crisis, increase food security, expand local food production, and strengthen relationships between state agencies, service providers, and the community. HB 831 is good for Maryland, and good for seniors.

For the reasons stated above, MSCAN urges a favorable report on HB 831. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ DHS Monthly Data Reports

² Maryland Hunger Solutions. 2020. MD County Hunger Profiles 2020.

<https://www.mdhungersolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MD-County-Hunger-Profiles-2020.pdf>

³ Maryland Hunger Solutions. 2019. Senior Hunger in Maryland.

http://mdhungersolutions.org/pdf/Senior_hunger_fact_sheet_OFFICIAL.pdf