



Dear Chair Barve and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee and Chair Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Future Harvest -- a farmer-based, membership nonprofit with the mission of advancing sustainable agriculture in the Chesapeake region -- is writing to ask you to support and advance HB831 and SB723: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed fractures in our global food system. Maryland farmers and other food businesses, on the other hand, adapted rapidly, but they are still working with ill-suited infrastructure and the uncertainty of what the new normal poses for their businesses. Further, the scourge of systemic racism has amplified these issues for farmers and food business owners of color.

We believe that formalizing a state-wide body that strengthens the regional food system will best help Maryland residents emerge from this current emergency and be prepared when other food emergencies arise. Importantly, a Food System Resiliency Council could also help the State address the challenges that communities of color have historically faced in accessing food and economic opportunities, the direct result of deep structural and systemic racism.

This bill is critical for establishing a food system that supports the farmers that keep our region food secure. **We urge a favorable report on HB831 and SB723.**

Sincerely,

Dena Leibman
Executive Director, Future Harvest