

Date: February 17, 2021

Bill: HB831 - Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Kumar Barve, Chair

Position: Support

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) is an organization representing approximately 1,200 licensed dietitians and nutritionists, dietetic interns, and students within the state of Maryland.

House Bill 831 *“Establishes the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council; providing the goals of the Council are to address the food insecurity crisis in the State due to the pandemic, develop recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the food system, and develop by November 1, 2021, a plan to increase the production and procurement of Maryland certified food; requiring the Council to submit an interim report by November 1, 2021, and recommendations on a statewide food policy council to the General Assembly by November 1, 2022.”*

Food insecurity is defined as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources. Food insecurities play a part of all the social determinants of health.⁽¹⁾

Current literature suggests that there is a direct correlation between food insecurity and health disparities. Adults who are food insecure may be at an increased risk for a variety of negative health outcomes and health disparities. For example, a study found that food-insecure adults may be at an increased risk for obesity⁽¹⁾ Another study found higher rates of chronic disease in low-income, food-insecure adults between the ages of 18 and 65⁽²⁾

In fact, prior to COVID-19, there were 37 million Americans that were food insecure, however the number may reach up to 54 million as the pandemic persists⁽¹⁾. Black, Latinx, and Native Americans are experiencing disproportionate burdens of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths from SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19)⁽²⁾ However, COVID-19 only exposed the health disparities that existed for years in these communities. Food insecurity and health disparities are a national issue that must be addressed.

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recognizes that many of the populations we serve are at risk for food insecurity. The Academy’s policy recommendations for healthy food systems and access include Food Security:

- Increase access to affordable, healthy foods and safe water in communities, places of work and schools.
- Support efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to link healthy food to positive health outcomes⁽³⁾

For these reasons we support the goals and aims of this legislation and ask for a FAVORABLE report on HB 831.

Dr. Glenda L. Lindsey, Dr. PH, MS, RDN, LDN
Public Policy Coordinator
Public Policy Panel

Helene Fletcher MS, RDN, LDN
MAND President

References:

1. Holben DH, Shelley AM. Diabetes risk and obesity in food-insecure households in rural Appalachian Ohio [Internet]. *Prev Chronic Dis*. 2006[cited 2017 Nov 27];3(3). Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2006/jul/05_0127.htm
2. Wolfson JA, Leung CW. Food insecurity and COVID-19: disparities in early effects for US adults. *Nutrients*. 2020;12(6):1648. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12061648> Crossref, Google Scholar.
3. <https://files.constantcontact.com/9806343e601/e5179f65-55a9-4410-9435-68ae82770260.pdf>