



HB831 – SUPPORT
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HB 831 Support
Maryland Food System Resiliency Council
Environment and Transportation
February 17, 2021

Dear Chair Brave and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee:

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign strongly supports HB831, which would establish a Food System Resiliency Council. No Kid Hungry Maryland is a campaign of national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength. Since 2008, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign has worked with partners, schools, and advocates to end childhood hunger throughout the state. No Kid Hungry Maryland leads the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland.

Twenty-two percent (22%) of kids in Maryland are growing up in a family that struggles with hunger. We know that food insecurity can lead to long-term health and social detriments. During this historic time with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our food systems and greater economy, the number of families with children struggling with food insecurity has grown. Many families who never imagined needing assistance have had to rely heavily on the formal and informal food assistance programs in their community. Many of the families are not eligible for SNAP or other Federal Nutrition Programs, and must rely on Maryland to provide much needed vital aid through community-based responses.

During this time, with the increased challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, this council is especially important. By establishing this office under the Maryland Emergency Management Agency, it formalizes the activities within the food system to be able to respond to challenges. What we have learned over the past months related to ease of access, coordination and gaps within our food system structures highlights the need to develop a coordinated effort to address this basic need.

A Statewide Food Resiliency Council would be able to build on local efforts and develop a collaborative way to comprehensively address the issues of food distribution, access, and food system alignment that is exacerbating the crisis of hunger and racial disparities. Multiple states through out the country, such as Colorado, Connecticut, Nevada and Massachusetts have developed structures such as the Food Council. This legislation will provide the framework for the administration to collaborate with key food system partners in Maryland to advance a resilient, equitable and sustainable food system.

In closing, we strongly support HB831 and encourage you to vote in favor of developing a Food System Resiliency Council for Maryland.