



Welfare Advocates

Founded 1979

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House Bill 831 Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

House Environment and Transportation Committee
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Support

Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate ourselves, and the wider community and to advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.

Welfare Advocates 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 and poverty 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 Food insecurity is a public health crisis, and the gaps in our state's safety-net systems to assist struggling low-income Marylanders has only been exacerbated by the pandemic. COVID-19 has laid to bare longstanding inequities in our systems, including inequitable access to adequate nutrition.

HB 831 establishes a statewide Food System Resiliency Council that will bring together stakeholders to address and end food insecurity in Maryland. 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. They are able to identify gaps in services, implement best practices for allocating resources, and strengthen the network of local providers. Amplifying this critical work by creating a statewide council would allow Maryland to respond to the current public health crisis, increase food security, expand local food production, and strengthen relationships between state agencies, service providers, and the community. The Food System Resiliency Council can help build a resilient, equitable, and sustainable food system in Maryland.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 831.

Submitted by Lisa Klingenmaier, Chair of Welfare Advocates

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>
