



FAMILY MEDICINE SHADY GROVE

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To,

February 11, 2021

Senator Dolores G. Kelley, Chair

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair

Senate Finance Committee

3 East Miller Senate Office Building 11 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: FAVORABLE SB - 322 – Health Standards, Plant-Based Meals in Prisons and Hospitals

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and committee: Our names are Dr Rohit Seem and Dr Manisha Kalra and we are here on behalf of Family Medicine Shady Grove LLC, Rockville, Maryland.

We both are board-certified family physicians practicing with great emphasis on nutrition and its role in disease prevention and reversal. We both have a background in preventative medicine, and we spend most of our time as primary care physicians on counseling patients on how to reduce their risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, common cancers, and many other chronic diseases brought on by poor dietary choices. It does not help that they are often surrounded by unhealthy food options. If Maryland can positively affect the food environment for vulnerable populations like patients and prisoners, it is a moral imperative that they do so.

Senate Bill 768 is a simple yet important measure that will lead to improved health outcomes for those in the State's care and provide both short-term and long-term cost-savings. This bill will require that hospitals and prisons make available plant-based meals for patients and prisoners.

Plant-based eating can reverse or help to manage many chronic diseases. A plant-based diet can reverse coronary disease, lower blood pressure, lower cancer rates and treat or reverse diabetes through improved glucose control. Studies of patients with even the most severe of heart disease have demonstrated reversal of their coronary artery blockages. In June 2017, the American Medical Association passed a resolution that calls on U.S. hospitals to improve the health of patients, staff, and visitors by providing plant-based meals. The American College of Cardiology made similar recommendations in *Planting a Seed: Heart-Healthy Food Recommendations for Hospitals*. The ACC says that "hospitalization can be a 'teachable moment' for patients who are ready to embrace nutrition as part of the healing process." In 2018, California's legislature passed a law requiring plant-based meals be available in hospitals and prisons. A similar law just became law in New York state, and the DC Council is also moving forward with such legislation.

A great deal of emphasis is given on treating diseases contributing greatly to the health care cost whereas, simple preventative measures can have profound results. Plant-based diets reduce risks of many chronic illnesses (along with acute flare ups), which in turn reduces the cost of hospitalizations, diagnostic testing and medications for treating illnesses.

Giving patients and prisoners in Maryland the ability to choose healthier meals benefits everyone. We urge your support of SB 768 and we are happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Rohit Seem in cursive script.

Rohit Seem MD, FAAFP

Handwritten signature of Manisha Kalra in cursive script.

Manisha Kalra MD, FAAFP