



**FAVORABLE
SB-322**

**Health and Wellness Standards - Correctional Facilities and Health Care Facilities
("PLANT-BASED MEAL Bill FOR PRISONS & HOSPITALS")**

February 11, 2021 @ 1:30PM

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee:

Violence and chronic diseases are plaguing communities of color. A cause of chronic disease stems from unhealthy eating and living. The correlation between chronic disease, unhealthy eating and living can be traced to fear and violence in the communities. In the 70's and 80's, people were more likely to spend more time outside engaging in physical activities. More specifically, children and young adults were more engaged in physical activities outside of their homes in urban settings considering violence and crime were not tolerated in what was considered as Clean Block Neighborhoods (Afro Staff, 2017). Now, residents of those once calm and peaceful neighborhoods are too intimidated by gangs and drug solicitations to spend time outside of their homes or nearby parks (Katz, Webb, & Armstrong, 2003).

Regarding the inmate population, prisoners are not able to choose when they eat, the way food is prepared, where they will eat or what they will eat which can cause great frustration with the inmates, resulting in more violence as a way of resisting the institutional framework ("Inmate not entitled to special fasting diet.", 2018).

Coppin State University, an HBCU is uniquely positioned to educate prisoners with dedicated professors who can teach the benefits of plant-based nutrition and lifestyle management to help inmates to make the right food choices – currently they do not have choice and passing this bill will give them the right to choose and we as professors are well equipped to teach them how to make effective choices.

For example, diabetes and prediabetes cost the state of Maryland \$6.5 billion dollars per year. A plant-based diet can address this health care issue. Coppin State University College of Health Profession address this healthcare and challenge in addition to cardiovascular health awareness.

Coppin's Community Health Center (CHC) is proof of the commitment to community engagement by providing health services including health education and preventive-care to reduce health disparities.

The majority of Coppin's College of Health Professions students (nursing and allied health) are recruited from Baltimore City and the immediate surrounding area. Over 90 percent of the students in the Helene Fuld School of Nursing (HFSN) and the School of Allied Health (SAH) are "underserved" from an educationally or economically disadvantaged background or a racial or ethnic majority underrepresented in health care. Our student and faculty population would be able to fulfil the demand for community-minded health workers equipped with cultural sensitivity and expertise in helping underserved communities to make "Lifestyle Changes" to improve their health and reduce health disparities.



Chair, Vice Chair and Committee
Page 2
February 11, 2021

Plant-based diets have been in the African American community since the 60s and 70s with the Black Hebrew Israelites and the Nation of Islam (Williams, 2019). The embracing of the plant-based diet during this era was a way of becoming healthier and reducing the consumption of medicine that may cause more health problems. With the insurgence of fast-food restaurants in our communities, or food deserts, unhealthy lifestyles and morbidity rates have increased.

Your passage of this bill will allow our schools to increase enrollment with new student populations while at the same time directly reducing health disparities in prisons and the community. Thus, this will allow us to respond to the demand for plant-based lifestyle management alternatives to meat. the health care delivery models that are appropriate to the community

CSU, as an HBCU, is ready to help make the outcomes of SB 322 a measurable success.

Sincerely,

Tracey L. Murray, DNP, CRNP, FNP-BC, RN
Dean and Professor
Chief Academic Nursing Officer
Director of the Health Centers

References

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- Katz, C. M., Webb, V. J., & Armstrong, T. A. (2003). Fear of gangs: A test of alternative theoretical models. *Justice Quarterly*, 20(1), 95–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418820300095471>
- Williams, J. P. (2019). Black Americans Ditch Meat — and Stereotypes. *U.S. News - The Civic Report*, C11.