



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 322 – Health – Health and Wellness Standards – Correctional Facilities and Health Care Facilities

Position: *Oppose*
February 11, 2021
Senate Finance Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association’s (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in opposition of Senate Bill 322. While we appreciate the intent of this legislation, hospitals oppose mandates of this nature in state law and regulations because dietary guidelines and definitions frequently change.

We know food is medicine. That is why Maryland hospitals offer plant-based meals to patients and visitors in accordance with their dietary needs. MHA works with advocacy organizations, including Friends of the Earth and Healthy Food in Health Care, to educate hospitals about these options. Last year, MHA partnered with these organizations to host a webinar to share strategies to serve more plant-based dishes and, more importantly, encourage patients and staff to eat more fruits and vegetables. It’s clear a plant-based diet benefits patients and the general population, improves health, and helps the environment. When there are adequate staff resources to prepare plant-based foods from scratch, there can also be cost savings. Our patients, employees, and community benefit from choosing these healthier options.

Maryland hospitals assist patients who have limited access to fresh produce to continue healthy habits at home after discharge. Many hospitals make fresh produce available to patients and communities. That includes “prescriptions” for locally grown vegetables that can be redeemed at hospital-supported farmers markets and Hungry Harvest subscriptions that deliver fresh fruits and vegetables directly to Marylanders.

MHA appreciates the ongoing conversations with the advocates and sponsors of this bill as we work toward our shared goal of ensuring patients have access to plant-based food. However, particularly as we continue the fight against COVID-19, we cannot support mandates that could eventually put us into conflict with the most recent guidance and best practices for food options in our facilities.

For these reasons, we urge an *unfavorable* report.

For more information, please contact:
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