



Testimony before the House Health and Government Operations Committee  
January 21, 2021  
In SUPPORT of HB 317 – Food-related GHG Reductions  
Presented by The Prince George's County Food Equity Council

Dear Chairman Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Prince George's County Food Equity Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 317 to reduce emissions from the food the state procures.

The Prince George's County Food Equity Council (FEC) is a local, independent, food policy council for Prince George's County, MD. We started our food policy council to provide a democratic platform for residents, farmers, health and anti-hunger advocates, educators, and food retailers to transform the food system into one that improves public health, ensures environmental sustainability, and spurs sound economic development. Our council uses an equity lens to focus on policies that increase opportunities for all residents to access healthy, affordable, safe, sustainably produced, and culturally-appropriate foods.

We support HB 317 because we know that climate change will impact low-income communities in a destructive manner. Addressing the GHG emissions associated with Maryland's food purchases is the logical next step in ensuring that healthy food is available for future generations.

The agriculture sector accounts for nearly one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, and research has shown that we cannot meet the Paris Accord targets without shifting our diets toward foods with a smaller greenhouse gas footprint. This legislation recognizes that the state's own food procurement is the most direct point of leverage to reduce emissions associated with food consumption. There is a precedent in Maryland for using procurement to support our environmental and social values. State agencies give preference to recycled paper, compost on public lands, locally grown foods, and American made goods, for example. This legislation builds on that framework by asking agencies and state universities to report on their food-related GHG emissions and reduce them by 25% by 2030, which the University of Maryland College Park has already committed to doing.

The recent IPCC report affirmed we have only a decade left to avoid irreversible climate damage. Maryland must do all it can to mitigate the emissions associated with our government's own operations, including addressing food purchasing at state agencies like correctional facilities, government buildings, and universities. This moderate proposal simply requires procurement units to collect the data necessary to assess baseline emissions from food purchasing and work toward reductions in their food carbon footprints.

The Prince George's County Food Equity Council supports HB 317 because as a food policy council that actively works toward a more equitable food system for all residents, we are acutely aware that climate change disproportionately affects lower-income communities of color. Since 2013, the FEC has



promoted farmers who are working to grow healthy, sustainable foods and advocated for policies that allow for low-income residents to access these healthy foods. For instance, the FEC convened stakeholders to successfully advocate for \$130,000 to be allocated to the Maryland Market Money program last fiscal year to support farmers and low-income consumers shopping for fresh, local foods at farmers markets. Additionally, we successfully advocated for extensive changes in the County's Zoning Ordinance Rewrite that resulted in local food, farming, and public health-friendly uses and use definitions.

The FEC acknowledges that by supporting less carbon-intensive foods through HB 317, we could also provide economic opportunity for our local agricultural producers as well as ensure a healthy food supply for all Maryland residents. In conclusion, HB 317 is a critical step toward addressing Maryland's food-consumption based emissions. Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Julia Groenfeldt  
Interim Director, Prince George's County Food Equity Council