



TESTIMONY FOR SB0121
MARYLAND FARMS AND FAMILIES FUND, MARYLAND FOOD AND
AGRICULTURAL RESILIENCY MECHANISM GRANT PROGRAM, AND MARYLAND
FARM-TO-SCHOOL MEAL GRANT PILOT PROGRAM – ALTERATIONS AND
ESTABLISHMENT

Bill Sponsor: Senator Hester

Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: **FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0121 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the necessity for a strong and resilient food system. We are all staring food shortages in the face, and there is a likelihood that they will get worse. We need solutions that will make our food system more reliable and sustainable, and less dependent on food that has to be shipped.

A shift to a more sustainable, localized food system can help strengthen supply chains, build up local farms, and bring equity to consumption and access. This bill invests in three programs to enhance resiliency and reduce food insecurity:

- Increasing Maryland market money, which doubles the value of federal nutrition benefits spent at farmers markets
- Piloting a farm to school grant program to increase school purchases of locally grown and produced food, and
- Creating the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM) to support Maryland-based procurement, harvesting, contracting, distribution, or processing for hunger relief efforts.

This is a multi-pronged approach to a real problem that we need to solve quickly.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.