



## Testimony before Maryland General Assembly

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

January 25<sup>th</sup> at 1:30PM

Adam LaRose, Director of Advocacy & Public Policy

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Good afternoon,

My name is Adam LaRose, I serve as the Director of Advocacy & Public Policy for the Capital Area Food Bank.

We serve Maryland's two largest counties, Prince George's and Montgomery, and work hand in hand with the Maryland Food Bank to ensure that the nearly 1 in 3 food insecure residents throughout the state are able to access the nutritious food they need and deserve.

The Capital Area Food Bank has had to take unprecedented actions during this crisis.

- We had to lease two new warehouses, one of which in Hyattsville, to be able to store the amount of food needed by our clients and partners.
- We needed that space to stockpile and navigate the ongoing market of supply chain delays, and product shortages.
- When our donations plummeted by 75 percent, a source of inventory that usually accounts for nearly 2/3s of our distribution, we had to purchase food in the open market.
- Since April 2020, we have purchased more than 1,100 truckloads of food; nearly 4 times more than pre-COVID.
- What used to take us 4 to 6 days to order a truckload of canned tuna or produce, can now take upwards of 4 to 6 weeks.
- And during this pandemic, we have provided 48 million meals to Maryland residents in need.

This has been the most resource and labor-intensive crisis we have ever navigated. Like that of the Great Recession, we anticipate this recovery will take years for our clients who were already dealing with a multitude of inequities.

This legislation would create the MD FARM program – modeled off of successful programs in Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. MD FARM would ensure MD sourced, born and bred, products and services would be leveraged to alleviate hunger, and build sustainable resiliency in our state.

This legislation would expand the Maryland Market Money program so our clients could make their SNAP and WIC dollars go further for their families.

This legislation would allow any one of the 24 school districts to receive incentives to use Maryland sourced agriculture products right onto the plates of our school children.

The pandemic exposed weaknesses in our food system that we must begin to address now, to not only help with the recovery of this crisis, but to prepare future ones. This legislation is a real step in that direction, and we sincerely hope for your support.

Thank you.