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BILL NO.: **SB 121**

TITLE: 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

SPONSOR: Senator Hester

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: January 19, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 121 – 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. This legislation would establish and fund programs combatting food insecurity throughout the State of Maryland.

In April 2020, Baltimore County saw a drastic increase in applications for food assistance with numbers surpassing those reached during the 2008 recession. The County partnered with local organizations supporting food distribution, mapping available food assistance, and utilizing PAL Centers for operations. Local non-profit partners were essential in this work, tirelessly supplying resources for a record amount of residents. The recent spike of Omicron has maintained the need for food in the community and put Baltimore County’s new Food Systems Coordinator to work assisting local groups in their efforts to feed residents.

This legislation will help support the local non-profits that have been excellent partners throughout the past year by granting funds for local produce. This funding will provide fresh, nutritious produce to food banks and build resiliency in the state’s food system. SB 121 also establishes Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program and Fund which will provide nutritious meals for students.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 121. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.