



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 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

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
January 25, 2022

Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs

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### Marylanders Against Poverty

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**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 121**, which increases funding for the Maryland Market Money program, establishes the MD FARM grant program for food assistance organizations to purchase, process, and transport Maryland crops to food insecure communities, and pilots the Farm-to-School grant program to reimburse schools and school districts for the meals served containing local Maryland-grown produce.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that one out of every three Marylanders may face food insecurity this year, a substantial rise compared to pre-pandemic years. Food insecurity is defined as not having consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day. This problem persists in every area of the state, and there are communities and populations disproportionately affected by food insecurity such as people of color, older adults, families with children, and those who are disabled. The causes of food insecurity are complex and often include underlying factors such as unstable housing, inadequate access to healthcare, and un- or under-employment.

Programs such as the ones that SB 121 aims to expand and establish can be crucial in the fight against food insecurity. The lack of access to healthy, fresh produce and meals is a major reason that Marylanders and their families continue to be food insecure, especially in areas where healthy foods and produce is difficult to obtain, financially or logistically, or even non-existent. Supporting farms, schools, and food assistance organizations working to make locally grown produce easily accessible and regularly available to food insecure Marylanders is imperative in helping rectify this inequity across the state.

Food insecurity has devastating impacts on individuals, families, and local communities. Many Marylanders were already dealing with this crisis, and the pandemic has exacerbated their need. Getting fresh produce into the hands of food insecure Marylanders should be a top priority of the state, and SB 121 can help achieve that reality.

**MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 121.**

**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP)** is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.