



3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

January 25, 2022

To: Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **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**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 121, legislation that does three things. It expands the current Maryland Market Money program by increasing the state's annual allocation from \$100,000 to \$300,000. Secondly, it creates the Maryland Food & Agricultural Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM). This program is modeled after the successful state programs in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, New York & Virginia. MD FARM would ensure that locally sourced produce, products, and services are utilized to allow food assistance organizations to: purchase surplus product, cover costs of distribution and processing, arrange contract growing, or assemble and create food boxes. As drafted, the bill would have the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) administer \$1.25 million annually to support Maryland-based procurement, harvesting, contracting, distribution, or processing for hunger relief efforts throughout the state. Thirdly, the bill would create the Farm to School Grant Pilot Program. The Farm to School Pilot Grant program would allow Maryland school districts to apply for grants of 20 cents for every meal served that includes a Maryland food component. Farm-to-school initiatives in Maryland currently receive no state-allocated funding or staffing for this purpose. This pilot would allocate \$500,000 across applicant school districts to further provide local, healthy food for Maryland's school children. Total funding allocation needed for this bill would be nearly \$2 million per year.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We encourage State and Local agencies and institutions to purchase all types of Maryland agricultural commodities and products.
- We support the state's Farm-to-School program and recommend funding be increased. We encourage all school systems to participate in and actively promote this program and purchase more locally grown products for school nutrition programs.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 121 AND REQUEST A FAVORABLE REPORT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson'.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396