



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 147 — 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

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

JANUARY 19, 2022

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the urgent need for a sustainable and equitable food system here in Maryland. Various actors have taken unprecedented actions to combat increased food insecurity during the pandemic; however, over 750,000 Marylanders still struggle to secure their next meal from day to day.

This legislation builds on the strength of Maryland agriculture, farms, and people to shorten supply chains, build up local farms, and bring greater equity in the consumption and access of healthy, local foods. The Farm to Food Security Act invests in three programs which address unique aspects of enhancing resiliency and reducing food insecurity.

The bill will increase the state allocation to the Maryland Market Money program from \$100,000 to \$300,000. This will increase the number of SNAP and WIC dollars that can be matched in order for households to buy local foods at farmers markets and farm stands.

The legislation will launch a Farm to School Grant Pilot program allowing 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 schools.

Lastly, this bill establishes the Maryland Food and Agriculture Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM) which would help mitigate the economic hardships and supply chain issues of COVID-19, by supporting emergency food providers to purchase Maryland agricultural products. MD FARM will require The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to administer \$1.25 million to support Maryland-based procurement, harvesting, contracting, distribution, and processing for hunger relief efforts throughout the state.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 147.