



January 21st, 2022

Testimony of Laura Hale

American Heart Association

Support of HB 179- Counties and State Legislative Districts - Food Environment Reports

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

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. The American Heart Association extends its support for House Bill 179 Counties and State Legislative Districts - Food Environment Reports. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association.

Access to nutritious healthy food is essential for long term heart health. Unfortunately, too many Marylanders do not have access to healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, living in food deserts/swamps. In these food deserts/swamps many Marylanders rely on convenience stores which primarily sell high salt food with low nutritional value. It is difficult, if not an impossible for these Marylanders to regularly get to a supermarket and have healthy foods. As such, Marylanders living in these areas suffer from higher rates of obesity and cardiovascular disease. These disparities have been event more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This legislation will allow us to have more comprehensive idea of the layout of food needs in the state.

The American Heart Association urges a favorable report on House Bill 179 to support the health of all Marylanders.