TERRI L. HILL, M.D.
Legislative District 12
Baltimore and Howard Counties

———

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations
and Health Facilities

Public Health and
Minority Health Disparities

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 214
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3378 · 301-858-3378
800-492-7122 *Ext.* 3378
Fax 410-841-3197 · 301-858-3197
Terri.Hill@house.state.md.us

———

District Office
410-884-4380
Fax 410-884-5481

SUPPORT
HB1352 - Health and Wellness Standards – Correctional Facilities

March 9, 2022

Dear Chairman Pendergrass, Vice-chair Pena-Melnyk, and Health and Government Operations and Judiciary Committees Members,

HB1352 seeks to improve the short and long-term health of Maryland's incarcerated population by requiring

   1) adoption of health and wellness standards that incorporate plant-based meal options;

   2) that food standards for correctional facilities and residential treatment centers be regularly updated every five years, consistent with the latest science and knowledge of best practices in diet, nutrition and health;

   3) that the plant-based whole meals, foods and beverages be available as options at every meal in hospitals and residential treatment facilities;

   4) inmates be allowed to opt into any of the available diet plans (kosher, halal, vegetarian, diabetic, etc.) without requiring a doctor's note or religious exception;

   5) conduction of a pilot study in at least 4 correctional institutions to examine the potential health benefits of incorporation of plant-based food options by requiring their Master Cycle Menu include 100% plant- based meal options at least one time per week as part of the standard menu offerings; and

   6). that the Maryland Department of Health to provide all health care providers in correctional facilities information on how to become trained and board certified in plant-based nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine.

HB1352 is introduced not only because the health and wellness of people charged to our care is a just concern, but also because not optimizing the health of Maryland's incarcerated population, is costly to the state. Maryland spends $150 million per year on inmate healthcare and 30% of the cost is on chronic degenerative diseases that we know can be improved and reversed through healthier diets generally and plant-based diets especially. The potential impact on heart disease, which can be reversed through plant-based nutrition, and is the leading cause of death for all Maryland residents, including inmates in correctional facilities, justifies passage of this bill.

Correctional facilities offer lacto/ova vegetarian options for each meal, but do not include whole meals rich in complex carbohydrates, fats and necessary vitamin and mineral supplements that ensure full and balanced nutrition. It is the consumption of the complex carbohydrates that are found in plant-based vs. non-plant-based diets that research shows to be instrumental in reducing and reversing chronic and debilitating health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic inflammation. These diseases generally require medications to manage and provoke the development of other diseases and conditions that, over a lifetime, contribute to poorer quality of life, diminished productivity, decreased life expectancy, and increased healthcare costs.

In 2019, Maryland entered into a five year, $680 million contract with Corizon to provide healthcare in our correctional facilities. **HB1352**'s pilot study includes a reporting requirement to provide oversight and transparency so that any changes in illnesses or diagnoses of inmates that may result from the implementation of this legislation may be documented. The end goals are simple: better food choices, physically and mentally healthier Marylanders, and reduced medical costs. I ask for a favorable report on **HB1352**.