

March 7, 2022



**2022 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
HB1352: Health and Wellness Standards - Correctional Facilities**

BILL: HB1352: Health and Wellness Standards - Correctional Facilities
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
POSITION: Testimony of Support of House Bill 1352
BILL ANALYSIS: This bill will require the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services to update minimum standards for incarcerated people food services in accordance with Secretary of Health guidelines. The Correctional Facilities Health and Wellness Pilot Program will be established to set those standards in participating facilities and further requires the Secretary of Health to adopt health and wellness standards for certain facilities.

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

The Montgomery County Food Council strongly supports HB 1352 Health and Wellness Standards - Correctional Facilities and urges a favorable report. The Correctional Facilities Health and Wellness Program would mark a significant step forward in setting health and wellness standards in our correctional facilities and providing more plant-based nutritional options to incarcerated people.

This innovative two-year pilot program will require four designated Maryland State Prisons to provide plant-based meals to incarcerated people who request it and Meatless Mondays for all incarcerated people. Additionally, it will track the rate of hospitalization and trips to urgent care for incarcerated people on plant-based diets compared to those who are not, provide educational information on the benefits of plant-based meals to incarcerated people, survey incarcerated people on their opinion of the plant-based meals, and will require the Maryland Department of Health to provide educational information to Maryland Physicians about Plant-Based Lifestyle Medicine.

As we saw 35 Covid-related deaths in Maryland prisons, it is important we take steps to improve the nutritional quality of food provided to people incarcerated within our correctional facilities and support their overall health. An immediate step we can take is to pass HB 1352 and standardize healthier choices and additional options for the food served in our correctional facilities. **For these reasons the Montgomery County Food Council is FOR HB1352 and urges a favorable report FOR this bill.**

The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources.

For more information, please contact: Heather Bruskin, MCFC Executive Director at the email and phone number below.

