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Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

CHIEF DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Public Utilities

Alcoholic Beverages

Property and Casualty Insurance



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB680
BALTIMORE COUNTY – PROPERTY TAX CREDIT – SUPERMARKETS**

Ways & Means Committee
February 15, 2022

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on HB680, Baltimore County – Property Tax Credit- Supermarkets. HB680 provides a property tax credit for supermarkets located in a food desert retail incentive area.

The USDA defines a food desert as a low-income tract where a substantial number or substantial share of residents does not have easy *access* to a supermarket or large grocery store. According to a study by Towson University in 2018, 64% of zip codes in Baltimore County are considered food deserts and contain predominantly low-income and minority neighborhoods.

While Baltimore County residents are able to acquire food, the fact that they live in “food deserts” means they do not have convenient access to fresh or nutritious foods from retailers. More often than not, individuals and families living in food deserts rely on pre-packaged and processed foods which are high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat. This kind of diet leads to health problems such as obesity, high cholesterol, heart disease, and more.

HB680 will empower Baltimore County to combat its food deserts by giving property tax incentives to grocery stores that open in these areas. This will give previously underserved communities access to healthier choices and improve quality of life outcomes. Additionally, a County Health Rankings & Roadmaps study found that grocery stores “can improve perceptions of food access, neighborhood satisfaction, and mental health” as well. Lastly, incentivizing grocery stores to open in predominantly low-income and minority neighborhoods would boost the economy by providing jobs to the areas that need them most.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Benjamin T. Brooks'.

Benjamin Brooks