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Susan O'Neill, Chair

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Testimony in Support of
Senate Bill 124 – Maryland Food System Resiliency Council
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
January 25, 2023

The Rural Maryland Council **supports** Senate Bill 124 – Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. This bill clarifies that the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council is housed within the Office of Resilience in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management.

The Rural Maryland Council supported the establishment of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council in 2021 (HB831/SB723 of 2021) and the establishment of the Office of Resilience in 2022 (HB706/SB630 of 2022) and continues to support this imperative work that alleviates food insecurity in the State in times of crisis. Food insecurity has been a problem across the nation, including the state of Maryland. Before the pandemic, the Maryland Food Bank claimed that one in every three Marylanders may be food insecure, meaning they do not know where their next meal is coming from. The economic effects of the pandemic have only increased the number of families currently struggling to find their next meal. During the pandemic, we saw that there was a 38% increase in new participants who received charitable food support according to Feeding America Network.

The Rural Maryland Council supports the good work of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council in addressing food insecurity. Additionally, it fits well in the Office of Resilience's goal to build neighborhood resiliency. We believe that SB124 is technical in nature and the Rural Maryland Council respectfully asks for your favorable report of Senate Bill 124.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”