



Maryland
Hospital Association

January 26, 2023

To: The Honorable Kumar Barve, Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: Letter of Support - House Bill 8 - Counties and State Legislative Districts - Food Environment Reports

Dear Chair Barve:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 8.

Access to nutritious food is essential to achieve optimal health and ensure health equity for all Marylanders. HB 8 will require the Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Planning, Department of Human Services, and the Department of Agriculture to produce a report for each county and legislative district describing the food environment. These reports will improve our understanding and awareness of food security across the state, supporting efforts to advance population health and health equity initiatives.

One in three Marylanders face food insecurity.¹ A 2021 study by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health found that nearly half of the Hispanic respondents experienced new and persistent food insecurity.² Marylanders on the Eastern Shore have the highest percentage of households statewide with food insecurity among Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Food insecurity prevents people from consuming a balanced diet and harms overall health. Unhealthy diets contribute to chronic diseases like diabetes and malnutrition if a person's healthy food intake is insufficient. Malnutrition can lead to diseases like hypertension and behavioral health issues like depression or anxiety.³ For children, food insecurity may cause developmental problems. Gathering data and identifying areas as food insecurity zones will allow us to better meet the needs of individual communities and promote the health of all Marylanders.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report on HB 8.

For more information, please contact:
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¹ Maryland Food Bank. "[Hunger in Maryland](#)".

² Maryland Food Bank. "[Food Insecurity in Maryland](#)".

³ American Hospital Association. (June, 2017). "[Social Determinants of Health Series: Food Insecurity and the Role of Hospitals.](#)"