

March 1, 2023

2023 SESSION TESTIMONY

BILL: HB1083 – Food System Resiliency Council – Invasive Species Coalition

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

POSITION: letter of information for HB1083 [HB 1083](#) - Food System Resiliency Council – Invasive Species Coalition

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement of information on HB 1083. This letter is submitted on behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC) on behalf of the Council and does not necessarily represent the views of the State of Maryland. The FSRC was established by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise, to work towards a common goal of a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19. One of the key mandates of this council was to develop equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the Maryland food system.

The MD FSRC offers this letter of information to clarify some issues raised in this bill.

HB 1083 does not address the food system – it addresses one particular product in the food system, and seems to address it in isolation. The council, as defined in the existing legislation, does not represent specific industries in isolation, but examines systemic issues and connections to address food insecurity, equity and sustainability, expanding the impact of existing food councils in the state, and increase production and procurement of Maryland-certified food. HB 1083 seems to purport the promotion of a single product, which is not the mission of the Maryland Food Resilience Council.

In addition, the Council is composed of 33 Council members to represent various food system sectors and interests to reflect the complexity of our food system. The FSRC only examines single sectors or products through systemic analysis. This bill requires at least six additional members who are invasive species experts, which would significantly alter the balance of council membership. In addition, under the current mission, those proposed members would not be permitted to promote that product. The rules regarding conflict of interest, transparency and financial disclosure would apply for these members as they do for all members of the council. In essence, instead of what seems to be goal of promoting the production and promotion of a single product, these experts would be limited to working on broad food system issues.

The MD Department of Emergency Management staffs the FSRC. While this bill identifies the invasive species coalition to meet requirements, the coalition would be staffed by MDEM and, therefore, MDEM's responsibility. As currently written, the bill is outside the expertise of MDEM and would require extensive management by MDEM staff due to the fiscal note estimated at over 2.5 million.

HB 1083 states that the MD FSRC has a sunset date after two years and extends it to five years. There is no sunset date in legislation, and there is no intent to sunset. The Council is open to discussing the food issue that the sponsors have expressed concern with, as we are with other industries and products in the state. We believe that there are more productive and efficient ways to address this than to undermine the mission and work of the Maryland Food Resilience Council.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this letter of information.

Sincerely yours,

Michael J Wilson
Chair, Communication and Coordination Committee
Maryland Food System Resiliency Council