



HB 0032 - SUPPORT

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HB 32 SUPPORT

Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 1st, 2023

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Prince George's County Food Equity Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 32 to permanently establish that the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council is in the Office of Resilience in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management and to alter the process for electing a Co-chair of the Council. The Prince George's County Food Equity Council is a local food policy council that works to help residents grow, sell, and choose healthy food. We are committed to increasing access to healthy, locally grown foods for our residents and increasing market opportunities for food entrepreneurs and farmers.

We support HB 32 because, during the pandemic, we saw how vulnerable our county was to food system disruptions and their devastating impact on resident food security and food business viability. These problems weren't limited to Prince George's; a [study conducted by the Maryland Food Bank](#) (which serves all of Maryland, except Montgomery and Prince George's County) showed that Maryland families reporting food insecurity quadrupled from December 2021 to June 2022, rising from 8% to 32%. While emergency allotments for federal food and nutrition assistance programs have provided relief to many families, we know those will end in March as our residents face record-high food costs.

At the same time, our state's food system is both threatened by and a contributor to the climate crisis. As Maryland continues to deal with climate-related weather events, it is critical that we take coordinated actions to mitigate the impacts of our food system on climate change and make the food system more resilient to a changing climate.

The Maryland Food System Resilience Council has provided us with a valuable opportunity to regularly connect with stakeholders from across Maryland tackling similar challenges. We need



this level of communication and coordination to extend beyond the pandemic response period to affect long-lasting change in our statewide food system. To move our food system from a state of vulnerability to resilience, we must close gaps in disconnected decision-making and break down silos that lead to inequities and inefficiencies. Initiatives like the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council foster resilience and crisis-readiness in our local food systems and will help us all better weather the next major adverse food system event.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 32. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Director, Prince George's County Food Equity Council