

March 16, 2023

2023 Session Support Testimony
SB0787: Human Services - Benefits Cliff Pilot Program - Establishment

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
POSITION: Testimony of Support of SB0787
BILL ANALYSIS: Establishes a Benefit Cliff Pilot Program within the Department of Human Services to mitigate the effects of the “benefit cliff” and assist those transitioning out of receiving benefits as they join the workforce.
SIGNED: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC)

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record in SUPPORT of S.B. 0787. This letter is submitted by Michael J. Wilson, Chair of the Communications and Coordination Committee of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC). These comments are submitted on behalf of the Council, and do not necessarily represent the views 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 toward 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 policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the Maryland food system.

The FSRC supports S.B. 0787, which would establish a Benefit Cliff Pilot Program within the Department of Human Services to help mitigate the effects of the “benefit cliff” and assist those transitioning out of receiving benefits as they join the workforce or increase the hours they work. The benefits targeted in this bill include food and nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Many families and individuals are on a fine line between maintaining eligibility for benefits like SNAP and WIC and losing their eligibility. The margin for this is a matter of tens of dollars a month in some cases, where a slight increase in hours worked or even a small wage increase can lead to being disqualified for receiving public benefits. For families that rely on these benefits, this can be a particularly difficult transition as the loss of benefits may not equal the amount of income gained. Establishing a program to provide support during these transitions can ensure a smooth adjustment and more financially stable households.

On behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC), I would like to record SUPPORT of S.B. 0787.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Wilson
Chair, Communications and Coordination Committee
Maryland Food Council Resilience Council