



ALLEGHENY EAST CONFERENCE CORPORATION
of Seventh-day Adventists®

February 14, 2023

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk - Chair
Delegete Ariana B. Kelley, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: FAVORABLE – HB0059 – Health Standards – Plant-Based Meals in Prisons & Hospitals

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee:

The Allegheny East Conference Corporation of Seventh-Day Adventists (AEC) operates and oversees 179, churches, 34 companies and 9 missions with a membership of over 32,000 that reside in the states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. In Maryland alone, Seventh-day Adventists have approximately 174 churches that represent approximately 60,000 members that are part of the Columbia Union of churches. We are Bible-believing Christians who base faith, hope, and the future in Jesus Christ. The name 'Seventh-day' indicates our adherence to the Biblical Sabbath of Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, while 'Adventist' means we anticipate the promised return of Christ.

Seventh-day Adventists operate health care institutions, like Adventist HealthCare, which is a not-for-profit health services organization based in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The institution employs more than 6,000 people and provides healthcare for more than 400,000 individuals in the community each year.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is considered a pioneer of the vegetarian movement in America. As early as 1863, one of our church founders advocated for a return to the plant-based diet outlined in Genesis 1:29 (KJV) which states, "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." The word "meat" in Hebrew means food. Consequently, the Church teaches the original diet ordained by God is a plant-based diet that includes fruits, nuts, grains, vegetables, legumes, and seeds historically called the vegetarian diet, now termed a plant-based diet.

The Church recognizes the Bible permits the consumption of animal-based foods after the flood, with the restriction that only clean animals should be eaten. But the Church encourages its

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members to choose the Genesis 1:29 diet as the best dietary choice for spiritual growth and physical development. Research done around the world supports the Genesis diet as one that can prevent and even reverse disease.

There are variations of the vegetarian diet, e.g., the lacto-ovo vegetarian diet that includes dairy and eggs. SDA members practice according to their choice.

The SDA Church university, Loma Linda University, established a large-scale, long-term epidemiological study on vegetarians called the Adventist Health Study. It demonstrated the health benefits of the plant based/vegetarian diet. The study showed vegetarians had much lower rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, and several other major degenerative diseases. In 2004, National Geographic performed a 10-year study called the Blue Zones and identified Seventh-day Adventist members living in Loma Linda, California are amongst those who live the longest in the world.

The Blue Zone study identified the healthful living practices, including the plant-based/vegetarian diet lifestyle of the Church as one of the primary reasons for longer life for those living in Loma Linda. Due to our history as a pioneer plant-based Church, AEC supports the legislative objectives of HB-1352 to provide inmates and patients in hospitals the ability to choose plant-based meal options.

While our Church hospitals share the rich history of vegetarian advocacy, due to our Churches respect for the dietary choices of the people we serve in our hospitals, and in the prisons we serve. Consequently, the Church sees HB1352 as an opportunity for our prison ministry missionary workers to provide education in the prisons regarding the benefits of a plant-based diet in order improve the health of the inmates, which our own epidemiological studies proved long ago, as the solution to preventing and even reversing chronic degenerative disease.

Finally, one of the Church's very active ministries in the U.S. is our prison ministry. HB1352 will allow our prison inmate converts to have the option to choose plant-based meals in Maryland correctional facilities.

It is for these reasons AEC requests a favorable report on HB1352.

Sincerely,



Jackson M. Doggette Jr., Esq.,
General Counsel