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February 14, 2023

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

Subject: FAVORABLE - SB –0059 – Health Standards Plant-Based Meals in Prisons

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee:

Our mission at Thrive Baltimore’s to provide free plant-based cooking demos, nutrition lectures, food tastings, film screenings and other fun, informational programming in an open, socially conscious environment where all are welcome to start and end their healthy lifestyle journey. We’re dedicated to encouraging people to make healthier, kinder choices that will enable them to live more conscious lifestyles.

By offering low-cost delicious vegan food at all our events, we at Thrive Baltimore are doing our part to raise awareness and address the health disparities and food access issues that plague Baltimore City. We’re also providing a practical alternative to the current food systems which cause so much harm to our health, our planet and the animals with whom we share the Earth.

Thrive Baltimore supports HB0059 for its third year in a row because we believe that inmates must be given the opportunity to choose to eat a healthy plant-based meal as part of their rehabilitative process in corrections. As a social impact organization, we believe that sustainable change starts with health minimally processed whole plant food that provide the best nutrition for mind, body and the emotional health of those challenged by life circumstances. Because inmates do not have the choice to select the best food for health and cognitive transformation, we see HB0059 as critical for the over goals of the “correction system” and that is to “correct” lifestyles that drove individuals to be incarcerated in the first place. The first step has to be “correcting” what they ate.

HB0059 must past this year because it also encourages medical professionals in prisons to obtain education in plant-based nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine, that the prison health care workers can do more to help inmates in “correct” their health and dietary habits. Most important is that HB0059 contains a training component for the inmates also wherein they can also learn the evidence-based lifestyle therapeutic approaches of a plant-predominant dietary lifestyle, which also includes regular physical activity, adequate sleep, stress management, avoiding use of harmful substances and pursuing other non-drug modalities to treat, reverse and prevent chronic disease. The educational training is aligned with our mission at Thrive and we believe that the education portion of the bill will be the greatest opportunity to truly reduce the health disparities that exist particularly in Baltimore prisons.

At the end day, when returned citizens are healthy and health care providers are properly equip to prevent and reserve chronic degenerative disease, communities can truly become health communities. Therefore, we request a favorable report for HB0059.

Sincerely,

Adam Weissman

Adam Weissman
Community Relations Manager