



February 10, 2023

Maryland General Assembly - Health Committee Testimony

Subject: FAVORABLE - House Bill 0059 - Health and Wellness Standards - Correctional Facilities

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and committee:

My name is Russell Zuckerman. As the Executive Director of United4Longevity, I am here to support HB0059 - Health and Wellness in Corrections. I reside in Anne Arundel County and am a retired US Coast Guard veteran. As a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and military veteran, I joined United4Longevity to continue to serve my community.

United4Longevity is a 501(c)(3) non profit focused on making high quality food available to all regardless of social circumstances. United4Longevity was built to help payers deliver effective Nutrition & Lifestyle programs to reduce overall healthcare costs and drive a strong value-based care model for those that need it most.

United4Longevity was called to action by the startling statistics that establish the connection between food insecurity and malnutrition, and poor health outcomes, increased health care utilization, and increased health care costs. Robust research show that 42M people (1 in 8) and 13M children (1 in 6) are food insecure. Significant racial disparities show that 21% of black individuals may experience food insecurity in 2021 compared to 11% of white individuals. Households rated with low food insecurity have greater than 50% higher probability of chronic illness. The annual health care cost of chronic illness is \$327B. Additionally, the United States has higher rates of maternal death than 45 other countries and is the only developed country with rising maternal mortality rates.

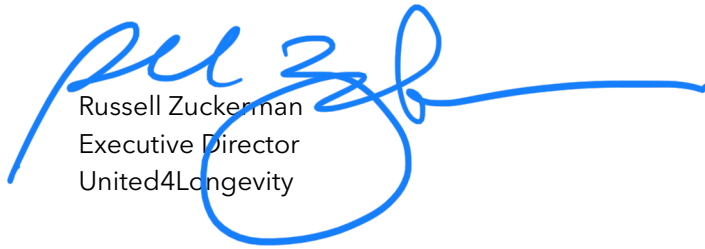
HB0059 is a simple yet important piece of legislation that will lead to improved health outcomes for those in the State's care, and also provide both short-term and long-term cost-savings. This bill will require simple changes that are cost effective in reducing population healthcare costs.

For example, Medically Tailored Meal Programs with supporting Medical Nutrition Therapy have demonstrated that increased access to fruits and vegetables are linked to reduced risks of some cancers, obesity, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes. These model programs have drove adoption of healthier eating habits for the focus population, and their household. These programs have also demonstrated reduced weight without calorie restriction. Outcomes of these studies result in significant positive critical health indicators, such as improved blood sugar control with an average >93% time-in-range, improved total cholesterol, as well as 100% of participants finding the programs helpful or very helpful in their health journey .

Plant-based diets reduce risks of diet related disease, which in turn reduces the cost of hospitalizations and medications for treating illness. Giving vulnerable populations and prisoners in Maryland the ability to choose healthier meals benefits everyone.

I urge your support of HB0059 and I'm happy to answer any questions.

In Health,



Russell Zuckerman
Executive Director
United4Longevity