

TESTIMONY
HB0059
PRISON HEALTH & WELLNESS

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair and Committee, I am Dr. Ruby Lathon, PhD, Certified Holistic Nutritionist, Director at Roadmap to Holistic Health, board member for the HBCU College of Plant-Based Lifestyle Medicine and board member of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. I support for a fourth time and ask for a favorable report for HB0059 the Prison Health & Wellness Plant Based Meal Pilot Project. As I reported in my prior years testimony, after my comprehensive review of the Maryland Department of Correction's 5 week meal menu, it is essential for this committee to provide inmates, not sentenced to the death penalty, the right to choose a nutritious plant-based diet so they can live and not die a premature death from chronic disease which makes up 1/3rd of the prisons \$130M health care budget and what this pandemic has reveals is death by Pandemic.

The Corrections inmate meal menu which consists of high amounts of saturated fat, sodium and very little fiber, water and macronutrients, serves almost 2 times the amount of animal foods than the maximum recommendation of 26 oz per week from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. As a certified holistic nutritionist, and wellness advocate for the life-saving benefits of plant-based nutrition, I can say, based on my review of the DPSC Master Meal Cycle, that the diet served to the inmates in Maryland's correctional facilities substantially increases the inmates risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, many forms of cancer and COVID.

The good news is that this committee can do something about this terrible health crisis in Maryland Prisons and that is pass HB0059 so that inmates can take control of their health and reduce the risk of costly chronic diseases, Covid or any communicable disease by having access to a plant-based foods.

In 2021, three very important Scientific Research Studies came out that proved the efficacy of a plant-based diet against Covid, which supports the hundreds of studies to have already proved that a plant-based diet can reduce and reverse chronic disease. According to a recent study of hundreds of healthcare workers published June 2021, in [BMJ Nutrition Prevention & Health](#), it was established that those who ate a 100% plant-based diet had a 73% reduction in Covid severity. That same study also showed that those who were on a predominantly animal flesh diet had an approx. 45% increase in Covid-19 severity. See <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8219480/>

In a second study performed by [Massachusetts General Hospital](#) published in September, 2021, it was stated that a healthy plant-based diet was also linked to a lower risk of "getting" Covid-19 and a lower risk of severe symptoms. Lastly, a third study of approximately 600,000 individuals was published in June 2021, also concluded that a plant-based diet was associated with lower risk and severity of Covid-19. See - <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/09/210908180530.htm>

In summary, the medical evidenced, establishes that HB0059 is an effective "preventative strategy" along with all other medical interventions for preventing death by pandemic in our prisons while also reversing chronic disease that the CDC has reported is the primary cause of Covid related death.

Therefore, I ask for a favorable report on HB0059.