



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 23, 2024

SB 311

Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program - Expansion

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 311 expands the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program (Grant Program) in several areas, most importantly by allowing certain, qualified nonprofit organizations to qualify for grant funding.

The Grant Program plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability, resilience, and innovation within our agricultural sector. By broadening the eligibility criteria to encompass qualified nonprofit organizations, the State of Maryland has the opportunity to further enhance the positive impact of this program.

Nonprofit organizations often bring unique perspectives, community engagement, and innovative approaches to addressing challenges in the food and agricultural space. Including them in the grant program would not only strengthen the diversity of the Grant Program but also help foster collaboration between governmental and non-governmental entities.

Additionally, many nonprofits have a proven track record of implementing successful programs that contribute to the overall well-being of our food systems in Maryland. Granting qualified nonprofits access to this Grant Program would help to amplify the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals in helping to supply agricultural food products to our state's food banks and charitable emergency food providers.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 311.

