

JOHNNY RAY SALLING
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Budget and Taxation Committee
Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment Subcommittee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Environment and Transportation Committee
Delegate Marc Korman
Delegate Regina T. Boyce
House Office Building
Room 251
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I express my gratitude to the Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee for granting me the opportunity to discuss Senate Bill 98. The growing issue of food deserts in our state, exemplified by the recent closure of a crucial grocery store in Baltimore County, necessitates attention. Notably, the last food desert study conducted in Maryland occurred about a decade ago.

Senate Bill 98 proposes a vital initiative, mandating the Interagency Food Desert Advisory Committee to conduct a comprehensive study and recommend strategies to alleviate food deserts across the state. These studies are crucial in identifying areas where residents face limited access to affordable and nutritious food, thereby highlighting vulnerable communities susceptible to food insecurity.

The significance of understanding the health implications of food deserts cannot be overstated, as the lack of access to fresh produce contributes to various health issues. Beyond health considerations, food desert studies can uncover economic opportunities and inform policies that incentivize the establishment of grocery stores in underserved areas. Engaging communities in these studies empowers residents, fosters a sense of community ownership, and encourages dialogue on systemic issues contributing to food deserts.

In conclusion, I appreciate the chance to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on addressing food deserts in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Johnny Ray Salling".

Senator Johnny Ray Salling