



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Lisa Pearson
CHAIR

Christopher Fortune
VICE CHAIR

Gopi Suri
SECRETARY

Mark Cissell
TREASURER

Nikki Highsmith Vernick
PRESIDENT & CEO

Jonathan Ilson Ahn

Yvonne Commodore-Mensah

Juliet Gilliam

Catherine Yelnosky Hamel

Brian Hepburn

Sharon Hoover

Sekou Murphy

Yvette Rooks

Celián Valero-Colón

David Wolf

Lanlan Xu

February 8, 2024

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

BILL: SB 98 – Department of Housing and Community Development
– Food Desert Study

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation is pleased to support SB 98 – Department of Housing and Community Development – Food Desert Study.

SB 98 would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to conduct a study and make recommendations on reducing the number of food deserts across the state. Food deserts are generally defined as neighborhoods and communities that have limited access to affordable and nutritious foods.ⁱ

Food insecurity has been a problem across the nation for many years. Like other communities across the state, Howard County families have felt the pain of rising food costs and an increasingly high cost of living. Though we are known as an affluent county, many of our lower- and middle-income families are at risk of, or are already experiencing, food insecurity.

Having current and accurate data about food deserts in our community and across the state of Maryland will help us design solutions to reduce food insecurity and hunger and ensure that everyone can easily access healthy foods. For this reason, the Horizon Foundation **SUPPORTS SB 98** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ *The Public Health Effects of Food Deserts: Workshop Summary*. National Research Council, 2009.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK208016/>