

# **HB 9 - FAV - MDEM - EEE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anna Sierra

Position: FAV

**FAVORABLE - HB 9**

**Public Safety - Food System Resilience Council - Definition and Reports**

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Hearing Date: 25 March 2025

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes today in support of **HB 9 - Public Safety - Food System Resilience Council - Definitions and Reports**.

**HB 9** is the result of recommendations from the Maryland Food System Resilience Council to clarify and modernize definitions within the statute to align with subject matter expert and advocate definitions.

MDEM worked closely with the sponsor on HB 9 and supports the amendments made by the House and the current version of the bill. The update to this statute would remove the requirement for the Food System Resilience Council to provide a regularly-updated strategic plan on how the State will increase local food production, procurement, and marketing opportunities. As an advisory body, the FSRC's ability to develop a strategic plan is limited, and since they have no authority or oversight over the programs which support or enhance local food production, their ability to operationalize or implement such a plan is also limited. However, the FSRC will continue to make policy recommendations on these areas as outlined by the amended version of this bill.

In conclusion, the Maryland Department of Emergency Management respectfully requests a favorable report on **HB 9 - Public Safety - Food System Resilience Council - Definitions and Reports**. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: [anna.sierra1@maryland.gov](mailto:anna.sierra1@maryland.gov).

# **Senate Testimony.HB9\_Delegate Lorig Charkoudian.do**

Uploaded by: Lorig Charkoudian

Position: FAV



## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### HB 9- PUBLIC SAFETY - FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCY COUNCIL - DEFINITIONS AND REPORTS

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Maryland's Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC) is a formally appointed body that meets regularly to coordinate efforts across several state agencies, non-profits, and grassroots organizations. It is dedicated to increasing the resiliency and sustainability of Maryland's food system, addressing equity and food insecurity issues, and expanding the impact of existing food council stakeholder organizations.

To be consistent with federal definitions, the FSRC has requested this bill to make the following language changes.

This bill will:

- Add a requirement that FSRC engage in ongoing policy recommendations to improve the equity and sustainability of the food system in Maryland.
- Replace "food waste" with "wasted food," citing the Environmental Protection Agency's definition: "Wasted food is an overarching term to describe food that was not used for its intended purpose and is managed in a variety of ways, such as donation to feed people, creation of animal feed, composting, anaerobic digestion, or disposal in landfills or combustion facilities."<sup>1</sup>
- Replace "food deserts" with "healthy food priority areas," a term used by several of FSRC's partner organizations to refer to areas with limited access to healthy foods. This is in line with the United States Department of Agriculture, which has also stopped using the term food desert.<sup>2</sup>

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 9.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gisportal.ers.usda.gov/portal/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=a53ebd7396cd4ac3a3ed09137676fd40>

# **HB009-EEE-FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



**BRANDON M. SCOTT**  
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations  
88 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

**HB 0009**

March 25, 2025

**TO:** Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** House Bill 9 – Public Safety - Food System Resiliency Council - Definitions and Reports

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 9.

HB 9 updates definitions related to the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council; defines “Healthy Food Priority Areas”; and updates reporting provisions for the Council. The switch from “food deserts” to “Healthy Food Priority Areas” is a positive step forward. We have been using the term Healthy Food Priority Areas in Baltimore City for over a decade now, and many other cities and states across the country have followed our lead. Conversations with our Resident Food Equity Advisors and our Food Policy Action Coalition as well as community groups, residents, and national leaders revealed that the term “food desert” is often met with critique or disapproval. “Food desert” suggests there is no food, when in urban environments there is an imbalance between healthy and unhealthy food. Additionally, the term puts the whole area in a liability framework and does not acknowledge the amazing grassroots work occurring on the ground to fill the gaps. While the frame changed, the definition did not.

In addition, the Baltimore City Food Policy and Planning Division is an active member of the Maryland Food System Resilience Council and agrees that the updated definitions and reporting provisions will benefit the Council as a whole.

For the above stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 9.

## **HB0009\_SevaGandhi\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Seva Gandhi

Position: FAV

Hearing 3/25 1:00 PM  
Seva Gandhi  
Bethesda MD 20817

**TESTIMONY ON HB0009- POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Public Safety - Food System Resiliency Council - Definitions and Reports**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Seva Gandhi

My name is Seva Gandhi. I am a resident of District 16 and a sophomore at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, MD. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0009, Public Safety - Food System Resiliency Council - Definitions and Reports.

As a high school student in the Leadership Academy for Social Justice pathway, I have not only learned firsthand about the disparities within different areas and communities concerning healthy food access but also about the profound impact of language.

HB0009 introduces the term "healthy food priority areas" to describe predominantly lower-income areas with limited access to affordable and healthy food retailers. This shift from the term "food deserts" aligns with contemporary understanding and emphasizes the immediacy of addressing food accessibility in these communities. Additionally, the bill adopts the term "wasted food," which is also used by the EPA, to describe food not used for its intended purpose and managed through various methods, including donations, animal feed, composting, anaerobic digestion, or disposal.

While these changes may seem minor, they are important. Language impacts how we perceive and address issues. The phrase "food desert" carries a negative connotation and often excludes rural areas facing similar challenges, and "food waste" is an inaccurate term. Standardizing Maryland's definitions with USDA and EPA standards ensures consistency in addressing food insecurity. Additionally, these changes display a commitment to equity in addressing food insecurity, something that needs to be taken into account. By redefining these terms, this bill encourages more accurate and respectful dialogue around food accessibility challenges, which is necessary for creating effective solutions.

As a student engaged in social justice work, I understand that words matter. HB0009 is an important step toward making sure that Maryland's policies reflect the reality of food accessibility challenges while also encouraging meaningful action to address them. I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB0009.