



January 25, 2025

2025 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY

HB0009: Public Safety - Food System Resiliency Council - Definitions and Reports

**BILL:** HB0009: Public Safety - Food System Resiliency Council - Definitions and Reports

**COMMITTEE:** Environment and Transportation

**POSITION:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 0009

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Altering certain definitions related to the Food Resiliency Council; defining what constitutes "healthy food priority areas" as predominantly lower-income areas that have limited access to retail outlets that sell, affordable, healthy foods, and defining "wasted food" as not used for its intended purpose that is managed in a variety of ways; and repealing certain outdated reporting provisions and updating ongoing reporting provisions.

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The Montgomery County Food Council strongly supports House Bill 9, which advances critical updates to the Food Resiliency Council and establishes key definitions and reporting provisions to improve Maryland's food systems and sustainability efforts.

### **Supporting Healthy Food Priority Areas**

This bill's definition of "healthy food priority areas" as predominantly lower-income communities with limited access to retail outlets offering affordable, healthy foods is a pivotal step toward equity in food access. Identifying and addressing these areas is vital to mitigating food insecurity, which disproportionately impacts low-income families and communities of color. By formalizing this definition, the state enhances its ability to develop targeted strategies to close gaps in food availability and affordability, empowering residents with the resources they need to thrive.

### **Recognizing and Addressing Wasted Food**

The bill's definition of "wasted food" as food not used for its intended purpose and managed through donation, animal feed, energy recovery, or composting, emphasizes the importance of sustainable food management practices. Wasted food represents both an environmental and moral challenge, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions while people in our state continue to face hunger. By including this definition, the bill supports a comprehensive approach to reducing food waste, encouraging partnerships across sectors to strengthen food

recovery efforts and improve resource efficiency.

### **Modernizing Reporting Requirements**

The repeal of outdated reporting provisions and the establishment of updated, ongoing reporting requirements reflect the evolving priorities of the Food Resiliency Council. Streamlined and timely reporting will enhance transparency and accountability, enabling the Council to focus on actionable solutions. Furthermore, the updated provisions will ensure that policymakers, community organizations, and stakeholders have access to relevant data needed to drive evidence-based decisions that improve the state's food systems.

### **Why This Matters for Montgomery County and Maryland**

In Montgomery County, food insecurity remains a pressing issue for over 100,000 residents. Many of these individuals live in areas that would be identified as "healthy food priority areas" under this legislation. Additionally, as an organization committed to reducing food waste, we see immense potential in leveraging the definition of "wasted food" to expand recovery and redistribution programs and mitigate the environmental impact of food waste. House Bill 9 aligns with our mission and offers a framework to advance shared goals across the state.

We urge you to support House Bill 9, which provides critical updates to definitions and processes that will enhance Maryland's capacity to build a resilient and equitable food system. This legislation represents a significant opportunity to address systemic inequities, reduce waste, and ensure access to nutritious food for all Marylanders.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We appreciate your leadership and commitment to improving the lives of our residents.

For more information, please contact Nanya Chiejine, Executive Director, at [nanya@mocofoodcouncil.org](mailto:nanya@mocofoodcouncil.org)

*The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources.*

