

MARYLAND ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS



Date: March 4, 2025
Bill: House Bill 1434 – Food Deserts Workgroup - Establishment
Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair
Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) is an organization representing approximately 1,000 licensed dietitians and nutritionists, dietetic interns, and students within the state of Maryland.

House Bill 1434 will establish *“the Food Deserts Workgroup to study and make recommendations regarding solutions to eliminate food deserts in the State; and requiring the Workgroup to report its key findings and recommended solutions to eliminate food deserts by November 1, 2025, to the Governor and certain committees of the General Assembly.”*

Millions of people in the US and around the world live in food desert areas where it’s hard or even impossible to find healthy foods. These deserts promote poor health outcomes, strain our economy, and reinforce the worst effects of social determinants of health.

Food deserts are known as areas without access to nutritious, high quality, and affordable food. The USDA describes them as any area with a 20% or greater poverty rate, and where a third or more of the residents live more than a mile away from a supermarket.¹

Food deserts are predominantly found in low-income areas where residents often lack access to cars. This is a recognized public health issue, with poorer health outcomes for lower-income individuals. Additionally, studies have shown that Black Americans are nearly 400% more likely than white Americans to live in neighborhoods that do not have a full-service supermarket.²

There is a great need for House Bill 1434 to assist with the elimination of poor health due to lack of nutritious and affordable food.

We ask that there be purposeful and active stakeholder engagement throughout the work of the commission. MAND stands ready as a resource and partner in this important undertaking.

For these reasons we ask for a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 1434.
Sincerely,

Tia Jeffery, PhD, RDN, LDN
MAND President
president@eatwellmd.org

Ilene Cervantes del Toro, MSPH, RDN, LDN
&
Arelis Torres RDN
MAND State Policy Representatives

Jessica Kiel, MS, RDN, LDN
MAND Public Policy Coordinator

¹ Reference: From Food Deserts to Food Oases: Addressing Access to Healthy Food. food revolutions.org
Ocean Robbins. Sept 11, 2020. Retrieved Feb 3, 2021

² Same as above