



January 25, 2025

2025 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
HB0008: Food and Milk Product Labeling

BILL: HB0008: Wasted Food Diversion Grant
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
POSITION: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 134
BILL ANALYSIS: Requiring, beginning July 1, 2026, certain food manufacturers, processors, and retailers to use certain terms regarding the quality or safety date on labels of food items manufactured for human consumption; prohibiting, beginning on July 1, 2026, a person from selling, or offering for sale, food items manufactured for human consumption with a certain label or that do not meet certain labeling requirements; requiring the creation of an educational program to inform consumers about the meaning of certain dates; etc.

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to SUPPORT the House Bill 8, which promotes transparency, reduces food waste, and enhances consumer understanding of food labeling through standardized date labeling requirements and public education.

Standardizing Date Labeling to Reduce Food Waste

This legislation requires, beginning July 1, 2026, that food manufacturers, processors, and retailers adopt standardized terms regarding the quality or safety dates on food labels. Confusion over date labeling is a significant contributor to food waste, as consumers often dispose of food prematurely, misunderstanding whether it is safe to consume. Establishing clear, uniform labeling practices will help Maryland households make more informed decisions, prevent unnecessary food waste, and ensure that food that is safe for consumption is not discarded prematurely.

Prohibiting the Sale of Items with Non-Compliant Labels

By prohibiting the sale of food items with unclear or non-compliant labels after July 1, 2026, this bill ensures accountability and consistency across food manufacturers and retailers. This provision is critical to safeguarding consumer trust and creating a food system that prioritizes clarity and transparency. Consumers deserve to understand whether a food product's date label pertains to safety (e.g., "Use By") or quality (e.g., "Best If Used By"), and this bill

provides a clear framework for achieving that.

Educating Consumers on Date Labeling

An equally important component of this bill is the creation of a consumer education program to provide clarity on the meaning of date labels. Public education is essential to ensuring the success of this legislation, as consumers will need to understand and trust the new labeling system to make informed decisions. This educational initiative will empower residents, prevent confusion, and reduce unnecessary food disposal.

Why This Matters for Montgomery County and Maryland

In Montgomery County, reducing food waste is a key strategy to combat food insecurity and achieve environmental sustainability goals. Clarifying date labeling will not only reduce waste at the household level but also open the door for enhanced food recovery efforts. For example, organizations like food banks and recovery programs will have greater confidence in redistributing food that meets safety standards but has passed a quality-based date.

Additionally, the environmental impact of food waste in Maryland is significant. Food that ends up in landfills contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating climate change. Standardized labeling and consumer education are practical, impactful steps toward mitigating this challenge.

Conclusion

House Bill 8 represents an important step toward reducing food waste, protecting consumers, and supporting a sustainable and resilient food system in Maryland. By adopting standardized date labeling and investing in consumer education, this bill addresses key barriers to food security and sustainability while fostering greater trust between consumers and food producers.

We urge the committee to vote in favor of House Bill 8. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving Maryland's food system

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

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