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of Howard County**

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**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 4, 2025**

**HB0056: FAVORABLE**

**Procurement - State Department of Education - Control Authority - Local Food Purchasing**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **Procurement - State Department of Education - Control Authority - Local Food Purchasing** for the benefits it offers school system food and nutrition purchasing efforts.

HB0056 gives the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) authority to procure local foods and contract directly with vendors without the oversight of the Board of Public Works. MSDE will develop bids for locally grown or produced foods such as fruits and vegetables. Local school districts can go online to find the contracts developed by the MSDE, look at the cost, and decide what to order.

Importantly, the bill does not preclude local school systems from making their own bids for other food items. HB0056 stipulates that Local Grown Products can come from as far away as 200 miles from a school district. In addition, foods must be grown at a Certified Local Farm. MSDE will be the Master Contractor to make sure the foods meet the needs of the program and come from a certified farm. HB0056 also does not have any cost associated with it for local school systems. MSDE will work with the Maryland State Department of Agriculture to establish a centralized platform to encourage the participation of Certified Local Farmers and Distributors letting them know of the procurement opportunities.

HB0056 is expected to save school districts time by having the bids written by MSDE. Also, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will reach out to farmers and distributors to encourage them to list their products on the bid, making more products available to schools. School systems may then shop by price on the website before buying the local products. Another benefit, if HB0056 passes, is that it allows school systems to enhance its participation in Farm to Tray foods.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report on HB0056 from this Committee.