



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0056**  
**Procurement – State Department of Education – Control Authority – Local Food Purchasing**

*House Health and Government Operations Committee*  
February 4, 2025

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports HB 0056 – Procurement – State Department of Education – Control Authority – Local Food Purchasing, which aims to create a more efficient and localized approach to food procurement by allowing the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) the authority to engage in procurement and contracting of local food purchasing with the goal of supporting local agricultural producers and removing barriers for school districts to provide fresh, local food to students.

Maryland Hunger Solutions is a statewide, non-partisan, nonprofit dedicated to ending food insecurity in Maryland by overcoming barriers to state and federal nutrition assistance programs and creating self-sustaining connections between Maryland residents and nutritious foods.

The central provisions of HB 0056 align with these goals by streamlining the connections between local farmers and agricultural producers with schools, creating an important opportunity to invest in the quality of school meals for Maryland students while also strengthening our state’s food system. Under the current contracting system, many small and medium-sized farms in our state struggle to access the broader public procurement market. Similar barriers also exist for our state’s smaller school districts that hinder these connections to the local market. By creating a system for master contracting under MSDE’s authority, school districts will have greater access to high-quality, sustainable produce from local farmers.

With the provisions in this bill, districts will have more opportunities to prioritize local food in school meals, improve the quality of food served to students, and contribute to a more sustainable food system.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for HB 0056. Thank you for your time and consideration.