



January 12, 2025

2025 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY  
HB0056: MSDE Local Food Purchasing

**BILL:** HB0056: MSDE Local Food Purchasing

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

**COMMITTEE:** Health and Government Operations

**POSITION:** Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 134

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Altering the list of units exempt from the authority of the Board of Public Works to control procurement to include the State Department of Education for the purpose of master contracting; altering the list of units that are defined as designated procurement units to include the Department with respect to master contracts related to local food; authorizing the Department to engage in or control procurements of certain local food; etc.

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

The Montgomery County Food Council strongly supports House Bill 56, which represents a critical step forward in advancing equity, sustainability, and resiliency in Maryland's food system. This bill represents a significant opportunity to strengthen local food systems and support Maryland's agricultural economy and aligns closely with our mission to build a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system in Montgomery County. We will support this bill with amendments below:



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1. **Section 7-136(a): Defining Local Farms**

- o Require farms supplying food under this provision be both located within a 200-mile radius and certified as Local Farm Enterprises by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). This would ensure Maryland's smaller farms are not disproportionately disadvantaged by larger, out-of-state monocropping farms (e.g., from Pennsylvania) that can easily outcompete on price but do not align with the intent of supporting Maryland's agricultural community.

2. **Section 7-136(c): Reporting Transparency**

- o Request additional details such as the name and location of contract recipients. This transparency will confirm that procurement opportunities are equitably distributed and not dominated by large monocrop operations, especially given the broad 200-mile radius. It will also allow stakeholders to ensure alignment with the bill's intent to uplift smaller, local producers.

**Why This Matters for Maryland Residents**

In Montgomery County, over 500 farms contribute to the local economy through the sale of farm products. By defining local farms in this amendment, this legislation provides a framework for supporting local producers. Additionally, defining local farms this way is essential for building long-term food system resilience. This bill ensures a sustainable approach to food security, benefiting not just our county but the entire state of Maryland.

**Conclusion**

We hope these amendments strengthen the impact of your legislation, ensuring that Maryland's farms and food systems remain the primary beneficiaries. We urge the committee to vote in favor of this important legislation and consider the amendments submitted in this testimony. The Food Council is happy to offer additional insights or support as you move forward with this important work.

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.*



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