

DALYA ATTAR
Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Education Subcommittee



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 122
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3697
800-492-7122 Ext. 3697
Dalya.Attar@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Senator Attar's Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 546 – Public Health – Food and Milk
Product Labeling – Requirements**

February 27, 2026

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

When Maryland families stand in their kitchens deciding whether to keep or discard food, they should not have to decode a series of inconsistent phrases to determine whether something is safe to eat or simply past its peak quality. Yet that is exactly what many consumers face today.

“Sell By,” “Use By,” “Best By,” “Best If Used By,” “Best If Used or Frozen By,” “Best Before,” “Packaged On,” “Manufactured On,” and “Expires On.”

A patchwork of date labels creates uncertainty that too often results in perfectly good food being thrown away. Senate Bill 546 brings clarity and common sense to this issue.

This legislation establishes two straightforward, uniform terms:

- **“Best If Used By”** to indicate quality; and
- **“Use By”** to indicate safety.

The bill makes clear that quality dates are about freshness and optimal taste, while safety dates communicate when a perishable item should be consumed or frozen. Just as importantly, this bill does **not** require date labels where none are otherwise required. It simply standardizes terminology when such labels are used.

Over the course of discussions with retailers, manufacturers, and other stakeholders, we have worked to ensure this bill is both consumer-friendly and practical to implement. I have drafted six amendments that reflect those conversations.

The first amendment removes references to milk and eggs, narrowing the bill's application and eliminating concerns about overlapping regulatory frameworks in those areas.

The second amendment establishes a sell-through provision so that retailers may continue selling existing inventory with older date labels until that stock is depleted. This prevents unnecessary economic loss or product disposal during the transition.

The third amendment clarifies that the Department must create educational materials by July 1, 2028, and removes language referring to an “educational program” to ensure consistency with the bill’s implementation timeline.

The fourth amendment expands the collaboration language in the educational materials section to authorize coordination not only with appropriate state partners, including the University of Maryland Extension and the Maryland Department of Health, but also with food donation organizations such as the Maryland Food Bank. This ensures food recovery partners are part of the conversation and that education efforts reflect real-world food distribution systems.

The fifth amendment adds an exemption for federally regulated food items to avoid conflict with federal law and ensure clear jurisdictional boundaries.

The sixth amendment extends the overall implementation timeline of the bill to 2028, aligning compliance expectations with stakeholder feedback and allowing sufficient time for transition.

Taken together, these amendments maintain the integrity of the bill while ensuring it is workable, predictable, and responsive to industry and consumer concerns.

By clearly distinguishing between quality and safety dates, Senate Bill 546 empowers consumers to make informed decisions. It reduces confusion without imposing unnecessary burdens. It supports food donation efforts. And it aligns Maryland with a growing national movement toward standardized, transparent labeling practices.

This is a practical reform rooted in clarity, consistency, and consumer protection. I respectfully ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 546.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dalya", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Senator Dalya Attar