

TESTIMONY OF DAN COLEGROVE ON BEHALF OF
THE PLANT BASED FOODS ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE MARYLAND SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 6, 2020

MADAM CHAIR AND MEMBERS:

I AM DAN COLEGROVE HERE ON BEHALF OF THE PLANT BASED FOODS ASSOCIATION. PBFA MUST RESPECTFULLY OPPOSE SB 188 AS CURRENTLY DRAFTED.

PBFA WAS FOUNDED IN 2016 TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF COMPANIES PRODUCING PLANT BASED MEAT AND DAIRY ALTERNATIVES. TODAY THE ASSOCIATION HAS GROWN TO OVER 160 MEMBER COMPANIES, RANGING FROM SMALL START-UP FOOD COMPANIES TO ESTABLISHED BRANDS TO INGREDIENT SUPPLIERS. MANY OF OUR MEMBERS MAKE AND SELL MEAT ALTERNATIVES USING AMERICAN-GROWN AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES.

PBFA IS OPPOSED TO THIS BILL BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS A SOLUTION IN SEARCH OF A PROBLEM. WE ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT CONSUMERS ARE FULLY INFORMED, THAT IS WHY WE HAVE ESTABLISHED INDUSTRY GUIDANCE FOR THE LABELING OF PLANT-BASED MEAT ALTERNATIVES. THE STANDARDS ALLOW FOR REFERENCES TO THE TYPE OF ANIMAL MEAT (I.E. "MEAT," "CHICKEN," "HAMBURGER," ETC.) AND THE FORM OF THE PRODUCT (I.E. "NUGGETS," "BURGER," ETC.) ALONG WITH A QUALIFIER THAT CLEARLY INDICATES THAT THE FOOD IS PLANT BASED OR VEGETARIAN. THESE QUALIFIERS INCLUDE: "PLANT BASED," "MEATLESS," "MEAT-FREE," "VEGETARIAN," AND "VEGGIE".

PBFA DEVELOPED THESE STANDARDS TO PROMOTE CONSISTENCY IN LABELING BECAUSE WE WANT SHOPPERS IN MARYLAND AND ACROSS THE U.S. TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE BUYING. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS APPROACH ENSURES AN OPEN AND COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION.

IF PASSED, SB 188 WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF SETTING MARYLAND APART FROM THE REST OF THE UNITED STATES WHEN IT COMES TO HOW THESE PRODUCTS ARE PRESENTED TO CONSUMERS.

MOREOVER, ENACTMENT WOULD RAISE SIGNIFICANT LEGAL CONCERNS. OUR MEMBERS' LABELS ARE IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH CURRENT FEDERAL REGULATIONS.

AS SUCH, ATTEMPTS TO IMPOSE NEW RESTRICTIONS RUN AFOUL OF FIRST AMENDMENT PROTECTIONS ALLOWING COMPANIES TO LABEL THEIR FOODS WITH CLEAR, NON-MISLEADING TERMS.

USE OF TERMS SUCH AS "MEAT" OR "BURGER" BY PLANT-BASED FOOD COMPANIES IS NOT MEANT TO DIMINISH THE VALUE OF PRODUCTS PRODUCED BY MARYLAND RANCHERS.

PBFA AND ITS MEMBERS DON'T BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BE IN THE POSITION OF CHOOSING ONE INDUSTRY OVER ANOTHER. THERE IS ROOM IN THE MARKET FOR ALL OF US.

FOR THESE REASONS AND OTHERS, WE MUST OPPOSE SB 188.

THANK YOU, I'M HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.