



March 3, 2020

**RE: Letter of Support for HB 772 – Food-related GHG Reductions**

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnk and members of the committee,

We, the undersigned group of environmental, social justice, and health organizations and experts, are writing to express our support for SB 478 (Lam)/HB 772 (Gilchrist). This legislation establishes a target of reducing Maryland's emissions from the food it purchases by 25% by 2030.

While Maryland does not currently track the emissions associated with food consumed in the state, food and agriculture account for at least a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to

the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Research has shown that we cannot meet the Paris Accord targets without shifting our diets toward foods with a smaller greenhouse gas footprint and slashing food waste. Reducing food waste and plant-rich diets were ranked the third and fourth, respectively, most effective climate solutions from Project Drawdown, a climate mitigation project led by Paul Hawken and worked on by a team of more than 200 scientists, policymakers, and other experts.

This legislation recognizes that the state's own food procurement - primarily for healthcare facilities, correctional facilities and universities - is the most direct point of leverage to reduce emissions associated with food consumption. There is precedent in Maryland for using procurement to support our environmental and social values. State agencies give preference to recycled paper, compost on public lands, locally grown foods, and American-made goods, for example. This legislation builds on that framework by requiring agencies and public universities to report their food-related GHG emissions and reduce them by 25% over the next ten years.

University of Maryland College Park is already tracking its food-related GHG emissions and has committed to the 25% reduction target.

Shifting purchasing toward more plant-based foods, which tend to have a much smaller GHG footprint than factory farmed meat and dairy, is a highly cost-effective climate mitigation strategy. Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) reduced its meat and dairy purchases over a period of two years and reduced their carbon footprint by 14%, while also improving student meal satisfaction. The school district invested some cost savings into buying more local and fresh produce and meat, and it saved \$42,000 annually on top of that. To achieve the same carbon savings by installing rooftop solar panels, it would have cost OUSD more than \$2 million dollars.

Procuring more plant-based foods will have co-benefits for the health of Marylanders served by public institutions. Research has shown that shifting to diets high in vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans, and low in red and processed meat, can help prevent heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and some forms of cancer, saving the state millions of dollars in health care costs associated with diet-related chronic diseases. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends vegetarian and low-meat, Mediterranean diets as healthy eating patterns that "are associated with reduced risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer."

The IPCC has warned that we have ten years left to avert the worst impacts of climate change. By tracking our food consumption-based emissions for the first time and setting a science-based target to reduce these emissions over the next decade, this legislation takes crucial steps toward addressing emissions from food and agriculture and positions Maryland as a climate leader.

Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully urge a favorable report for H.B 772

Sincerely,

350 Baltimore

Agriculture Fairness Alliance

A Well Fed World

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Balanced

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Environmental Justice Ministry  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Clean Water Action  
Do The Most Good  
Envision Frederick County  
Environment Maryland  
Fair Farms  
Food Revolution Network  
GreenFaith  
Greenbelt Climate Action Network  
Harford County Climate Action  
Maryland League of Conservation Voters  
Maryland Legislative Coalition  
Nuclear Information and Resource Service  
One Meal A Day for the Planet  
PlantPure Communities, Inc.  
ProVeg International  
Reducretarian Foundation  
Sunrise Movement Howard County  
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee  
The Plantrician Project  
Transition Howard County