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Testimony before the House Health and Government Operations

March 3rd, 2020

In **SUPPORT** of HB 772: Food Procurement – GHG Emissions (Del. Gilchrist)

Presented by the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

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

On behalf of the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE) and our hundreds of nurse members in Maryland, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 772 to establish a target of reducing Maryland’s GHG emissions from food purchases by 25% by 2030. This would be accomplished by reducing food waste and shifting to more climate-friendly – and also healthier – menus in our public institutions.

ANHE is the only national nursing organization focusing solely on the intersection of health and the environment. Our mission is to promote healthy people and healthy environments by educating and leading the nursing profession, advancing research, incorporating evidence-based practice, and influencing policy. Climate change is the most significant threat to public health that we currently face (Watts, et. al., 2018). Recent research indicates that in order to prevent the most severe impacts of climate change, significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions need to occur by 2030 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2018). We need policymakers to take rapid action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to meet this 2030 goal.

The agriculture sector accounts for at least one quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions, and research has shown that we cannot meet the Paris Accord targets without shifting our diets toward foods with a smaller greenhouse gas footprint. This legislation recognizes that the state’s own food procurement is the most direct point of leverage to reduce emissions associated with food consumption.

The state could meet this 25% reduction goal by cutting food waste and a moderate shift toward climate-friendly (plant -forward) menus. In addition to the benefits for climate, plant-forward menus will benefit the health of patients in Maryland’s healthcare facilities, people who are incarcerated, and students at universities. On average, Americans are consuming significantly more meat than is recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Overconsumption of meat, especially red and processed meat, is linked to diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and even some forms of cancer. Preventing diet-related disease will help save the state money on healthcare costs in addition to improving the lives of Marylanders.



Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Bringing Science and Passion to the Environmental Health Movement

As nurses, we recognize that these reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and meat intake is a win-win for health.

HB 772 will benefit the climate and the health of Marylanders. Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully urge a favorable report.

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References:

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] (2018). Summary for policymakers. In: Global warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. Geneva, Switzerland: World Meteorological Organization.
- Watts, N., Amann, M., Arnell, N., Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Belesova, K., Berry, H., ... & Campbell-Lendrum, D. (2018). The 2018 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: shaping the health of nations for centuries to come. *The Lancet*, 392(10163), 2479-2514.