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John Stoddard
Healthy Food in Health Care Program
Health Care Without Harm

Re: Support for H.B 772: Procurement – GHG Emissions from Foods (Del. Gilchrist)

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

Health Care Without Harm has been supporting hospitals since 1996 in shifting their procurement and modifying their operations to be healthier for people, the communities they serve, and the broader environment.

We fully support this bill as it is reflective of the interest by the hospitals and the health sector to track and reduce their carbon footprint and leverage the plethora of available resources and support to be successful in doing so.

Our global network, representing over 32,000 health care organizations, has acknowledged that climate change is a health issue. Greenhouse gas emissions are the leading cause of climate change, which directly impacts the lives of millions of Americans every day. The health impacts of climate change also lead to increased rates of diseases, from respiratory and heart disease to tick-borne illness to mental health problems.

Healthcare alone contributes to 10% of overall greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. Despite having a healing mission health care operations contribute significantly to climate change and as a result, to the very diseases it is trying to treat. Health Care Without Harm has a strong network of 30 health care system partners in Maryland who are committed to taking action to reduce their carbon footprint. Many health institutions, including Bon Secours and Johns Hopkins' health facilities in Maryland, are already taking action to reduce their carbon footprint through operational changes, investments and purchasing.

Hospitals in the state are already reporting annually on their reductions of food-related GHG emissions through our national health sector survey and awards program. To achieve this, they

access a suite of tools and resources and a peer network of health organizations across the country working on the same effort.

The request to track the GHG emissions associated with food purchases is an easy move for hospitals because a reduction in carbon-intensive foods is also aligned with goals to shift institutions and the general public towards a healthy diet that is in line with national Dietary Guideline recommendations.

This bill is also in alignment with a new global, cross-sector initiative called the Cool Food pledge where hospitals working with Health Care Without Harm are committing - alongside universities, businesses and cities - to track and report their food purchases and reduce their associated greenhouse gas footprint by 25% by 2030.

Adoption of this bill will position the state as a leader in addressing public health by supporting purchases that create healthy communities rather than exacerbate health impacts and associated costs of climate related events. The tools and resources exist to support institutions in doing so and momentum is building by institutions and cities to take action to reduce their footprint. This bill is an important step in reducing carbon footprints associated with food purchases.

We would like to thank Delegate Gilchrist for his leadership in sponsoring this bill and all committee members for your consideration.

Thank you,

John Stoddard

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