

Testimony before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 3, 2020
In support of H.B 772: Food Procurement – GHG Emissions
Presented by Cam Bowdren, Owner of Forward Brewing

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B 772 to establish a target of reducing Maryland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from food purchases by 25% by 2030.

My name is Cam Bowdren and I'm the Owner of Forward Brewing, which currently brews beer in Baltimore with a restaurant and brewery that is set to open in the Eastport neighborhood of Annapolis within the next few months.

I am here because as a new business owner, I've weighed the impact my business will have on my local community and our larger environment. I take seriously my responsibility to contribute to the City and State in which I've always lived, and I've weighed the social and environmental effects of the thousands of decisions, large and small, I've had to make to get Forward Brewing off the ground and on its way to being a viable, responsible, and successful business.

With a name like Forward, we must consider and act upon the larger consequences of the influence we have and the dollars we spend.

When it comes to food, we've carefully considered the environmental impact of our menu, and I hope to only make progress over time in serving food that is not only innovative and delicious, but also environmentally sustainable. This last part is very much a part of today's innovation.

I'm aware that this bill would not directly affect food purchasing by Maryland restaurants, but I felt compelled to testify in support nonetheless because I see an opportunity for Maryland to be forward-thinking in its purchasing decisions, as we try to be as a business. The current standard American diet is too heavy in animal products for our own good or the good of the planet. Maryland has an opportunity to be the first state to curb its food-related emissions and demonstrate that we take seriously the contribution of food systems to our environmental challenges and are doing what we can to build a livable future. This is part of the vision I want for the future of the Maryland: one that recognizes the climate threats we face and uses its leverage to address the problem.

In addition to running Forward Brewing, I'm also a new father: my 5-month-old daughter, Halsey, deserves to grow up enjoying the Chesapeake Bay, the Eastern Shore, and the four distinct seasons that I enjoyed growing up in Maryland, the same four seasons that we all remember. Her children and grandchildren deserve that, too. I make business decisions with her in mind. I ask you to do the same and make legislative decisions to protect the resources and environment that are in peril for future generations.

First and foremost, I believe that you have an obligation to protect the health and safety of Marylanders. This legislation would begin to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of our food, and that alone would be the first step toward a better future; but it could also have ripple effects that improve our chances of preventing devastating changes to our climate. I can assure you that Forward Brewing would stand behind and emulate the state's food sustainability efforts, and we would encourage other breweries and restaurants to do the same.

H.B 772 will help protect our environment and benefit the health of current and future Marylanders. I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration and efforts in charting Maryland's future.