



**ALLEGHENY EAST CONFERENCE CORPORATION**  
of Seventh-day Adventists®

February 25, 2020

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Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice  
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House Health and Government Operations  
Committee, Room 241  
House Office Building

Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Senate Education, Health, and  
Environmental  
Affairs Committee  
2 West -Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street

Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair  
Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Vice  
Chair  
House Judiciary Committee, Room  
101  
6 Bladen Street - House Office

Senator William C. Smith, Jr.,  
Chair Senator Jeff Waldstreicher,  
Vice Chair Senate Judicial  
Proceedings Committee  
2 East - Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

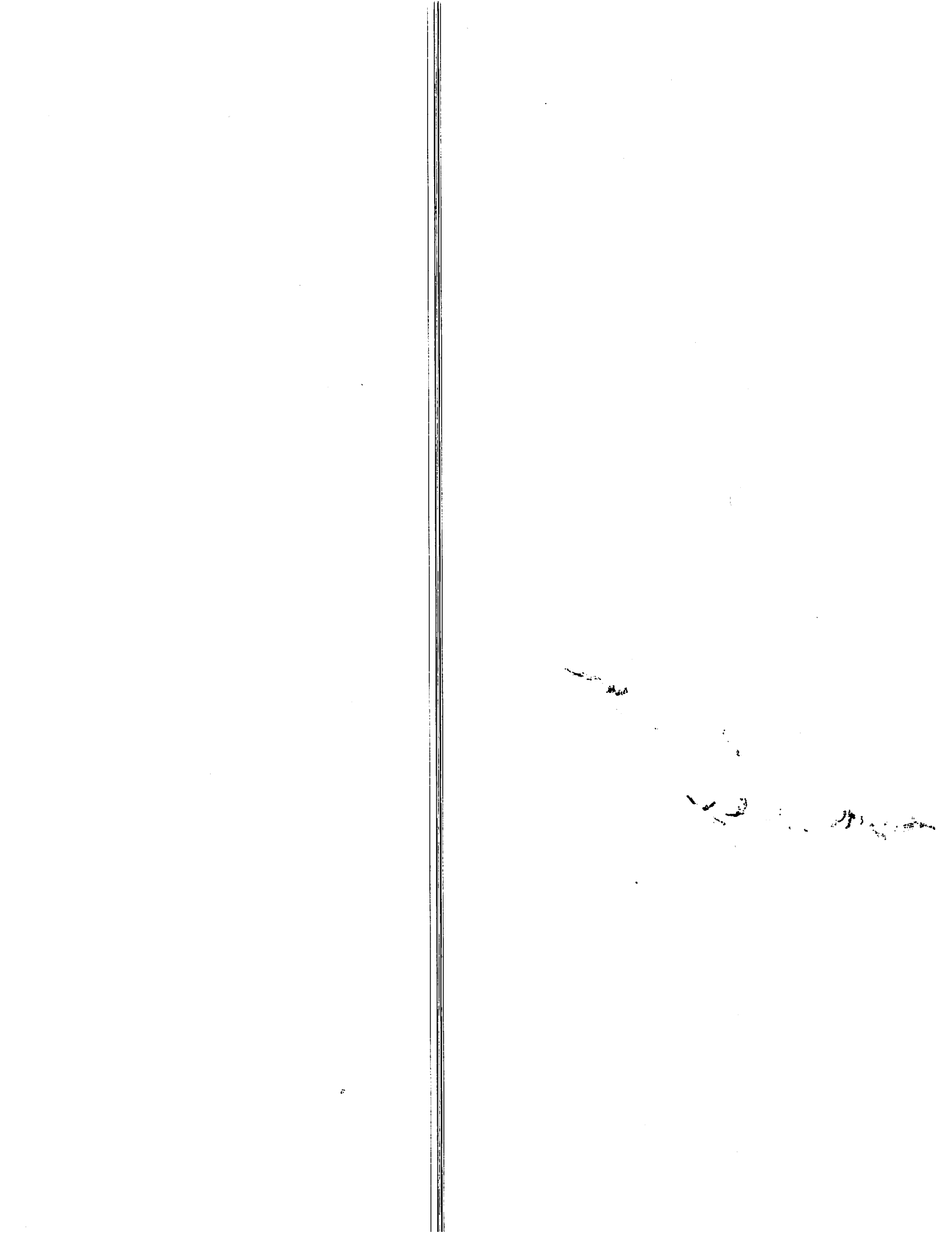
**RE: FAVORABLE - SB-768/HB-819 - Health Standards - Plant-Based Meals in  
Prisons and Hospitals**

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committees:

The Allegheny East Conference Corporation of Seventh-Day Adventists (AEC) operates and oversees 170, churches, 34 companies and 9 missions with a membership of over 40,000 that reside in the states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. In Maryland alone we have approximately 174 SDA churches that represent approximately 60,000 members that include churches in the Columbia Union of churches. We are Bible-believing Christians who base faith, hope, and the future in Jesus Christ. The name 'Seventh-day' indicates our adherence to the Biblical Sabbath of Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, while 'Adventist' means we anticipate the promised return of Christ.

In addition, we operate health care institutions, like Adventist HealthCare, which is a not-for-profit health services organization based in Gaithersburg, Maryland that employs more than 6,000 people and provides healthcare for more than 400,000 individuals in the community each year.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is considered a pioneer of the vegetarian movement in America. As early as 1863, one of our church founders advocated for a return to the plant-based diet outlined in Genesis 1:29 which states, "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." The word "meat" in Hebrew means food. Consequently, the Church taught the original diet ordained by God was a plant-based diet that includes fruits, nuts, grains, vegetables, legumes, and seeds historically called the vegetarian diet, now termed a plant-based diet. While the Church recognizes the Bible, due to the mitigating circumstance of sin entering the world, permits the consumption of



animal-based foods after the flood, with the restriction that only clean animals should be eaten, the Church overall encourages its members to choose the Genesis 1:29 diet as the best dietary choice for spiritual growth and physical development. Many other variations of the vegetarian diet, like the lacto ovo vegetarian diet that includes dairy and eggs, are also practiced by members according to their choice. Not all members are vegetarians.

Nevertheless, over the Churches 150+ years of commitment to the vegetarian diet, the Church is known for founding vegetarian food manufacturing companies around world. Most notable, is our Church university, Loma Linda University, large-scale long-term epidemiological study on vegetarians called the Adventist Health Study, which demonstrated for the first time in the U.S. the health benefits of the vegetarian diet. The study showed vegetarians had much lower rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke and several other major degenerative diseases. Later in 2004, National Geographic performed a 10-year study called the Blue Zones and identified Seventh-day Adventist members living in Loma Linda are amongst those who live the longest in the world. The Blue Zone study identified the healthful living practices, including the vegetarian/plant-based dietary lifestyle of the Church as one of the main reasons for the longer life.

Due to our history as a pioneer plant-based Church, AEC supports the legislative objectives of SB-768/SB-819, which is to provide inmates and patients in hospitals the ability to choose plant-base meal options. While our Church hospitals share the rich history of vegetarian advocacy, due to our Churches respect for the dietary choices of the people we serve in our hospitals, our hospitals have not predominantly served plant-based meals in order to accommodate the taste preferences of its patients.

Consequently, the Church sees SB 768/HB819 as an opportunity for our hospitals to return to our historic Bible and evidenced based roots of vegetarianism, which our own epidemiological studies proved long ago, as the solution to preventing and even reversing chronic degenerative disease.

Furthermore, one of the Churches very active ministries in the U.S. is our prison ministries and SB-768/HB819 will allow our prison inmate converts to have the option to choose plant-based meals in Maryland correctional facilities.

It is for these reasons that AEC requests a favorable report on SB768/HB-819.

Sincerely,



Jackson M. Doggette Jr., Esq.  
General Counsel

