

Testimony to the Maryland House Economic Matters Committee Friday February 19, 2021 on Bill HB0996 by John Beutler, Representing the Frederick County Consumer Cooperative t/a The Common Market

Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and Economic Matters Committee: I represent the 7,500 owners of the FCCC, trading as The Common Market. We operate two full service grocery stores in Frederick County which serve over 15,000 shoppers, with an estimated \$30 million in sales for the current fiscal year. We have grown over the 40 years of our existence to become a local institution, providing organic and local food to our shoppers. As chair of our Advocacy Committee, I am tasked with advocating for policies which serve the interests of our owners, as codified in our Ends Policies. These goals are:

1. A prosperous, just, and vibrant local food economy, connecting local consumers with local food sources.
2. An economically successful and growing business operated on the model of cooperative ownership, serving as a practical alternative to corporate, profit-driven, absentee ownership, and fostering the expansion of the cooperative model.
3. A community whose members are educated about food, health and wellness choices, about social and environmental issues in food production, and about the value of cooperatives as an alternative business model.
4. A model for the use of environmental resources that is increasingly sustainable in the products we sell, the business we operate, and the practices we promote and support in the larger community.

One group of local products which we are not currently able to provide is organic and local beer and wine. As you may know, Frederick County has a thriving brewing and winemaking industry. For several years, our Board has contemplated how to obtain a beer/wine license, but current Maryland law prohibits some groceries from holding such licenses. (Curiously, the Bethesda Food Coop DOES have a beer/wine license). Clearly there is a need to change the law, from our point of view.

HB0996 and its companion SB0763 would remedy this situation, and therefore we enthusiastically support its enactment.