



# Fair Farms<sup>®</sup> Maryland

a campaign for healthy food, land & waterways

## House Bill 1325 (Delegate Amprey) Food Insecurity Zones – State Legislative Districts – Reports

Position: Support

March 2, 2021

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Fair Farms in support of House Bill 1325, sponsored by Delegate Amprey. The bill would require the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Planning to jointly produce a report for each State legislative district on the food environment, with an eye to highlighting food insecurity zones, in that district.

The Fair Farms campaign of Waterkeepers Chesapeake brings together consumers, farmers, public health professionals, and conservationists to advocate for a food system that is equitable, fair to farmers, invests in homegrown healthy foods, and restores our waterways. We are a growing movement of over 35,000 Marylanders and close to 200 partner farmers, businesses, and nonprofits. These partners include national organizations like Farm Aid, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Family Farm Defenders, and National Family Farm Coalition and local groups like the Maryland Organic Food and Farming Association, Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, and the Farm Alliance of Baltimore.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity rates across the country were the lowest they had been in 20 years. Since the start of this public health crisis, there has been a major increase in food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> The Maryland Food Bank alone saw an 89% increase in visitors from March to December 2020 over the 2019 food distribution rates.<sup>2</sup> While these inequities within our food system exist during strong economic times, they are being felt more intensely and by larger numbers of people.

The COVID-19 crisis has also put existing disparities into sharper focus. Before the pandemic, Black individuals were 2.4 times as likely to live in food-insecure households as their White

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief\\_Local%20Impact\\_10.2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief_Local%20Impact_10.2020_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><https://mdfoodbank.org/maryland-food-banks-covid-19-response/#:~:text=Through%20the%20end%20of%202020,%2Dquarantined%2C%20or%20quarantined%20populations.>

counterparts. According to Feeding America's revised food insecurity projections, 72% of counties nationally projected to have the highest 2020 food insecurity rates are majority-Black.<sup>3</sup>

In order to craft public policies that will effectively guide equitable food policy, programs, and resources and expand food access, it's critical that we understand whether a specific locale is a healthy food environment, and what factors contribute to its standing and House Bill 1325 will help us do that. We must have reliable, up-to-date, consistent information on food insecurity. This includes understanding the quantity and variety of staple food groups and healthy options in various neighborhoods, and the retail environment.

This research, analysis, and mapping that will be undertaken under this proposed measure are necessary steps in understanding the unique challenges faced by communities across the state as they seek to address food insecurity. For these reasons, we stand strongly behind this bill and urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report of House Bill 1325.

Sincerely,

Shelby Kalm  
Fair Farms Campaign Manager  
Waterkeepers Chesapeake

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief\\_Local%20Impact\\_10.2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief_Local%20Impact_10.2020_0.pdf)

