

January 19, 2022

**2022 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY  
HB0147: Farm to Food Security Act**

**BILL:** HB0147: Farm to Food Security Act  
**COMMITTEE:** Environment and Transportation  
**POSITION:** Testimony of Support of House Bill 0147

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Passing the Maryland Farm to Food Security Act; This bill will expand the Maryland Market Money program, which matches federal food benefits at Maryland farmers markets; create the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM), ensuring locally sourced produce, products, and services will be utilized by food assistance organizations; launch the Farm to School Grant Pilot, which will allow Maryland school districts to apply for grants provided their meals include a Maryland food component.

My name is Heather Bruskin, and I have the privilege to serve as the Co-Chair of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. I am speaking here today on behalf of the members of the Council itself – not the government or the Governor’s office- in SUPPORT of HB147, the Maryland Farm to Food Security Act.

The Food System Resiliency Council was established by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise to work toward a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19.

One of the key mandates of this council was to develop, by Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the Maryland food system.

The report represents five months of intensive work and thought leadership on behalf of organizations such as both the state’s two food banks, all the state’s food councils, leaders in anti-hunger advocacy, emergency food assistance providers, state administrators, emergency responders, food system experts and universities.

The recommendations in the report, and thus the experts on this council, made clear that each of the three provisions in this legislation comprise excellent steps to help alleviate food insecurity, respond to this crisis, and prepare for future crises.

The MD Farm program would take steps to make our state a leader in the space of leveraging local agriculture to alleviate hunger and food insecurity. It would help food assistance providers, large and small gain access to the local and culturally appropriate products needed by their clients.

The expansion of Maryland Market Money would allow the program to increase the number of markets in the state and it would greatly benefit clients who could make their SNAP and WIC dollars stretch much further.

Finally, the Farm to School Grant Pilot would allow school districts to receive incentives for using Maryland grown products onto the plates of our next generation.

As Co-Chair of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council, and behalf of the membership of the Council, we enthusiastically encourage a favorable report for this legislation and the incredible opportunity it provides to build a more just, equitable, and resilient food system.

Thank you.