

Community F.A.R.E

Food, Advocacy, Resources & Education

February 11, 2022

Environment & Transportation Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

House Bill 147 (Delegate Charkoudian)
Maryland Farms and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agricultural
Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program, and Maryland Farm-to-School Meal
Grant Pilot Program – Alterations and Establishment

Position: Support

Dear Chair Barve & Committee:

On behalf of Community FARE, an organization that promotes local food security and access, we support House Bill 147, sponsored by Delegate Lorig Charkoudian. We thank Delegate Charkoudian, her staff, and the stakeholders who drafted this bill for their continued efforts to strengthen Maryland's food network. The three pillars of the bill address food insecurity issues exacerbated by supply chain fragility brought on by the COVID crisis. HB 147 would help to create a more resilient local food system in Maryland by supporting Maryland agriculture, food banks and charitable emergency food providers, and farm to school programs that are building a sustainable market for local agriculture.

The prolonged and ongoing effects of the COVID pandemic have increased the need to provide support to Maryland residents in crisis. SNAP benefits to Maryland residents have increased 39.1% year over year as of October 2021. Maryland household participation in the SNAP program over the same time period have increased by 27.5% (FNS.USDA.gov - SNAP data tables). The crisis has illuminated the extent and consequences of reliance on food coming from distant sources and has resulted in widespread shortages in food accessibility. Passage of HB 147 would help to alleviate food insecurity in Maryland by strengthening Maryland's reliance on local food supplies and providing Maryland farms with consistent markets.

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As leaders of the Frederick County Food Council and members of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council within the Maryland Emergency Management Agency, Community FARE supports the growth of a resilient local food economy.

FARE's initiatives include the following:

Farm to School Frederick County in partnership with Frederick County Public Schools works to increase locally grown food available to students in Title 1 schools, provides educational material to teachers and curriculum developers, and partners with Frederick's Blessings in a Backpack program to distribute fresh food from local farms to food insecure families.

Frederick Fresh Online, an web-based local food and product market, provides consumers convenient access to local producers and farmers using sustainable and regenerative practices.

Expansion of initiatives like those mentioned above can strengthen these beneficial projects and facilitate new ones that will assist individuals and families in need, as well as support the economic interests of our small and mid-sized farms and food businesses.

It is for the reasons stated above that we urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report of House Bill 147.

Respectfully,
Janice Wiles

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