

Date: January 25, 2023

Bill: Senate Bill 124 - Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair

Position: Support

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) is an organization representing approximately 1,200 licensed dietitians and nutritionists, dietetic interns, and students within the state of Maryland.

Food insecurity is defined as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources. Food insecurities play a part of all the social determinants of health. (1)

Current literature suggests that there is a direct correlation between food insecurity and health disparities. Adults who are food insecure may be at an increased risk for a variety of negative health outcomes and health disparities. For example, a study found that food-insecure adults may be at an increased risk for obesity. (1) Another study found higher rates of chronic disease in low-income, food-insecure adults between the ages of 18 and 65. (2)

In fact, prior to COVID-19, there were 37 million Americans that were food insecure, however the number may reach up to 54 million as the pandemic persists (1). Recent data indicates that Black, Latinx, and Native Americans are still experiencing disproportionate burdens of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths from SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19). (2) However, COVID-19 only exposed the health disparities that existed for years in these communities. Food insecurity and health disparities are a national issue that must be addressed.

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recognizes that many of the populations we serve are at risk for food insecurity. The Academy's policy recommendations for healthy food systems and access include Food Security:

- Increase access to affordable, healthy foods and safe water in communities, places of work and schools.
- Support efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to link healthy food to positive health outcomes ⁽³⁾

We strongly support the goals and aims of the Council and appreciate the broad range of membership of the Council. We look forward to working with the Sponsors, Committees, and the Advisory Council to identify opportunities for participation of licensed dietitian nutritionists in the work of the Council.

For the reasons noted above we ask for a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 124.

Thank you for your consideration.

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References:

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2. Wolfson JA, Leung CW. Food insecurity and COVID-19: disparities in early effects for US adults. *Nutrients.* 2020;12(6):1648. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12061648> Crossref, Google Scholar.
3. <https://files.constantcontact.com/9806343e601/e5179f65-55a9-4410-9435-68ae82770260.pdf>