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**House Bill 358 - Prince George County- Workgroup on Health and Wellness
Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Garden International is a mushroom farm located in Prince George's County, Maryland. At The Garden, our mission is to 'plantify' the world. We strive to build restorative, and sustainable systems that work in harmony with nature. We feel strongly that the tides are turning, and it is time to cultivate ecosystems that feed local communities and the economy. The Garden International writes to support House Bill 358 – Prince George County- Workgroup on Health and Wellness. If enacted, the legislation will contribute to our mission of using minimal natural resources to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the Earth and all its inhabitants.

House Bill 358 would support healthy food initiatives and food equity for all. According to a previous study done by the University of Maryland and their "Mapping a Path to Food Equity in Prince George's County". data shows that approximately 14% of the Prince George's County population is considered food insecure. House Bill 358 would be the first step in gathering the data for the much-needed studies to be done to change the 14% insecurity to a 0% insecurity. We encourage you to build on the work done by the Institute for Public Health Innovation and the Food Equity Council to investigate health issues in Prince George's County. Developing strategies to implement recommendations found in report such as the 2021 Prince George's County Food Security Task Force Recommendations can create a thriving, healthy community. If enacted, we know House Bill 358, and the findings of the study will serve all farmers and the community well. If passed, we ask that the State and Prince George's County work together to ensure the funding to implement this workgroup is secured.

This bill establishes necessary measures for expanding community development, educational opportunities like food literacy, public health, and reducing food waste. Addressing the vulnerabilities in our health system is essential in building resilient communities that can withstand food crisis. The Garden believes when communities have equitable access to food resources, it can contribute to social cohesion and a sense of shared purpose. House Bill 358 would allow a collaborative effort to address the issues that we can all work on to strengthen our community bonds. This bill if enacted will provide a focus on health and wellness with preparation for the future and enhance healthy lifestyles and equitable access to all.

Therefore, we respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 358.

For more information call or email:

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