



Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Communication and Coordination Committee
Virtual Meeting
January 23, 2023 1:00am-2:00pm

1. Welcome - Michael J Wilson Committee Chair

a. Appointed Members Attendance:

- i. Anne Palmer (voting member of committee)
- ii. Beth Brewster
- iii. Daphene Altema
- iv. Heather Bruskin (voting member of committee)
- v. Michael J Wilson (voting member of committee)
- vi. Steve McHenry (voting member of committee)

b. Announcements:

- i. Heather Bruskin – Is accepting the new Director position, launching the Office of Food System Resilience in the Montgomery County government.
- ii. Michael J Wilson - Meetings have always been open to the public to ensure engagement and transparency of processes. We want to ensure sharing of information, there may be situations in which members (including the committee chair) will recuse themselves due to a potential conflict of interest, and provide transparency of advocacy. Lastly, this year the committee will determine positions on bills on behalf of the Food System Resiliency Council, ratification from the full council will no longer be required. This process is approved by the appointed FSRC members to ensure efficiency during the session.
- iii. The [FSRC Legislative Tracker](#) will be emailed to attendees of this meeting. This tracker is open to the public.

2. Bill Review - Anna Sierra -MDEM-



- a. [HB0008](#) - Counties and State Legislative Districts - Food Environment Reports
 - i. Synopsis: Requiring the departments of Housing and Community Development, Planning, Human Services, and Agriculture jointly to produce a report to the General Assembly for each county and State legislative district on the food environment in the county and district on or before July 1, 2024, and every 2 years thereafter; requiring the reports to include metrics that determine food insecurity zones; authorizing the departments to collaborate with certain universities, nonprofit organizations, and local planning and zoning departments; etc.
 - ii. Other Notes: Introduced in the 2021 Session as HB1325. Continued in the 2022 Session as HB0179. The bill was changed from a "required reports" bill to an establishment of a "workgroup on food environments" who will produce a report. The stated purpose is: "establishing the Workgroup on Food Environments to determine and make recommendations regarding the most cost-effective method for producing a report on the food environment in each county and State legislative district; and generally relating to the Workgroup on Food Environments." Last available status is "In Senate - Hearing 3/31/22 at 1:00 pm".
 - iii. Group Discussion:
 1. Sydney Daigle - As written there are concerns that this bill could misrepresent the number of food insecure residents within a district or county, that may not be eligible or taking advantage of programs (e.g. SNAP, WIC). Other metrics may be used but there doesn't appear to be other income related guidance.
 2. Heather Bruskin - It would be helpful to revisit bills we've taken position on last year, to determine if what was discussed during the prior session is still a consideration this year.
 3. Anne Palmer – There is a long history with this bill, during the last two sessions significant time was spent with staff drafting the bill providing recommendations. None of the



recommendations were used, and the bill has not been revised. As a center that has spent a lot of time measuring food environments in Baltimore and throughout the State, this is not a bill we would endorse.

- iv. Committee position: No position taken
- b. [HB0108](#) - Human Services - Universal Basic Income for Transition-Age Youth – Establishment
 - i. Synopsis: Establishing the Universal Basic Income for Transition-Age Youth Program in the Department of Human Services to provide for the economic security of individuals aging out of the out-of-home placement program; providing that payments made under the Program may not be considered income or resources for purposes of determining eligibility for certain benefits; and requiring the Department to report annually on the Program to the General Assembly.
 - ii. Group Discussion:
 1. This is focusing on universal basic income, while this relates to food and the focus of the group, this is not a food specific bill.
 2. Due to the lean capacity of the committee, should the committee consider bills that are periphery related to food and food security? Clarity is needed for this bill and other bills in the future.
 3. Staff's initial intention for including this bill and others like it is for awareness, and possible consideration for a position if the committee feels strongly (e.g. SNAP access for college students, which is a group where food access/security continue to be a challenge).
 4. This is a meaningful learning activity and platform for highlighting food or food adjacent bills that are happening at the State level, this is a good example of something Montgomery Food Council could take a position on. Maybe the agendas can be a place to flag bills that may not be taken by the FSRC, but can be a beacon for other partners.
 5. The legislative tracker is intended to be used to collect and share all bills related directly or indirectly to food efforts.



6. Note: The bill establishes the universal basic income for youth that are transitioning out of house placement programs. The income and resources that may provide, does not impact eligibility for the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Earned Income Tax Credit, or the State and Federal Financial Aid and College Support Programs, therefore can be used for basic life needs.
 7. This bill is not related to the focus of the council, however is there a way to track bills other organizations are supporting? Due to limited capacity we will not track bills where no position is taken.
- iii. Committee Position: No position taken
- c. [SB0034](#) - Department of Agriculture - State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture
 - i. Synopsis: Establishing the State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture as a position in the Department of Agriculture. The bill defines “value-added agriculture” as the alteration of a raw agricultural product in a way that increases the product’s worth to a consumer and brings more revenue to a farmer, producer, or processor. This includes all enterprises in which an agricultural business or the agricultural business’ products are altered, marketed, produced, or processed in a way that adds income to a farmer, producer, or processor. The State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture is appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and must: (1) serve as the primary point of contact for individuals engaging in, or interested in engaging in, value-added agriculture in the State; (2) provide information regarding State and federal regulations relating to value-added agriculture; (3) act as a liaison between State and federal partners involved in value-added agriculture; and (4) perform any other duty or function that supports value-added agriculture in the State, as required by the Secretary. The bill requires a position identification number (PIN) to be created in MDA for the State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture.
 - ii. Group Discussion:



1. MDA is supporting the bill.
 2. There is relevance for the council's work in the food system.
 3. The bill includes wine.
 4. Uncertain how much we want to burden staff, this is a good bill which should be widely supported by the agriculture community.
 5. Supporting a bill does not always mean we are providing (written, or oral) testimony, our council can just be listed as in support. MDEM staff are not allowed to write/provide testimony. An appointed member of the committee would need to contact the office/legislator to report the council support of the bill.
 6. In the past we deferred to FSRC committees to take leadership of authorship, if available.
 7. The hearing is scheduled next week.
 8. Questions can be sent to Senator Hester, if needed.
- iii. Committee Position: The committee is in support, but would like to support the bill in a way that is not going to overburden the committee, therefore the relevant parties will be contacted.
- d. [SB0038](#) - Minority Business Enterprise Procurement Contract Financing
- i. Synopsis: Establishing a Minority Business Enterprise Procurement Contract Financing Program in the Maryland Small Business Development Financing Authority to provide working capital to qualified minority business enterprises in order to facilitate their ability to enter into and complete performance under State procurement contracts; authorizing certain loans and grants under certain circumstances; etc.
 - ii. Group Discussion:
 1. The bill has merit but it is a general bill toward minority and small business enterprise support, which is not directly related to the food system.
 2. Some bills that are designed around economic development, can be unhelpful to food businesses specifically, because there are other businesses in mind



while language is developed. We could add value by reviewing the bill language as food entrepreneurs to ensure language is crafted so food businesses are able to partake in the benefits.

- iii. Committee Position: No position taken
- e. [SB0128](#) - Economic Development “Emergency Relief Program”
Established
 - i. Synopsis: Establishing an Emergency Relief Program in the Department of Commerce to assist certain small businesses in the State to recover from economic hardships sustained from multiple emergencies.
 - ii. Committee Position: No position taken
- f. Other Considerations:
 - i. [HB0032/SB0124](#) hearing is Wednesday, January 25, 2023, is testimony being facilitated?
 1. The committee has not drafted testimony. We are unclear if there are concerns for conflict of interest regarding the committee providing testimony.
 2. The department has put in a request to the legislator but no confirmation was received.
 3. The committee should send in a one-page report in support (request must be filed by 3pm the day prior).
 4. MDEM AAG will confirm if there is a conflict of interest, then follow up with the chair committee.
 5. Michael J Wilson volunteered to provide testimony in support of the bill per committee approval.
 - ii. There are two bills related to school meals (1) Healthy School Meals for All, and (2) Full Funding for Maryland Meals of Achievement. Both bills are in the process of being written.
 - iii. MCFC is launching a Food System Advocacy Community Call tomorrow at 1 PM. Agenda here - feel free to share with anyone interested:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Dh1Byg_Z8y5nsb68N1km-N9XGzTOeaFF/view

3. Next steps and adjourn



- a. Meetings are weekly, on Monday from 1pm – 2pm (login information is posted on the [website](#))