



Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Communications and Coordination Subcommittee

Minutes

Feb 14, 2022 1:00pm - 2:00pm

Action Items:

- Gather more information about P-EBT for virtual schools: **Ary Amerikaner**
- Draft testimony for HB0855: **Steve McHenry**
- Draft testimony for HB0857: **Michael J. Wilson**
- Draft and send testimony for HB0661: **Heather Bruskin**
- Draft testimony for SB0630: **Identify a volunteer**

1. Welcome - Michael J. Wilson, Subcommittee Chair
2. Senate protocol update - Anna Sierra
Anna and Michael J. provided an update on the new Senate protocol effective 2/14, which moves all hearings to in-person with no option for recorded or virtual testimony. Hearings will still be streamed, but all oral testimony must be made in person.
Moving forward, the Council will only submit written testimony unless Heather or a Council member specifically requests oral testimony for a particular bill.
3. Bills for Review - Anna Sierra
 - a. New this week:
 - i. [SB552 \(HB0695\)](#) - Environment - Climate Crisis Plan - Requirement (Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022). *Sydney asked how heat islands relate to food systems. Anna explained that heat islands are urban areas that get much hotter than surrounding areas and neighborhoods due to lack of tree canopy, presence of excessive dark asphalt, etc. Urban agriculture is often cited as a way to mitigate heat islands.*
Michael J. suggests monitoring this bill; no objections raised



- ii. [SB0630 \(HB0706\)](#) - Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Office of Resilience. Establishing the Office of Resilience in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Brandon Engle from Sen. Hester's office explained the bill and noted that the FSRC had included mention of an Office of Resilience in its report. Heather asked if Brandon had suggestions for food-related items to include as amendments; Anna reminded the subcommittee that the FSRC is required to determine a permanent home for the Council, and this could potentially be its home (although this could be premature given where the Council is in its decision making process). Sydney suggested that given the limited language involving food currently in the bill, the subcommittee should continue to monitor unless anyone feels strongly otherwise; Brandon responded that they expect this bill to move forward and that Sen. Hester wants to give the Council the opportunity to shape the legislation if it wants. Anne Palmer asked what additional information is needed; Brandon replied that they would need draft language for any amendments the Council wishes to include. Michael J. proposed draft testimony in support of the bill with attention drawn to include amendments specifically related to food resiliency and the FSRC; no objections.
- iii. [HB0855](#) - Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund - Establishment.
Steve McHenry provided context and details for the bill. He said the bill has broad support and is likely to move; Heather Bruskin said that because it doesn't seem that FSRC support will make a significant impact, that we should monitor this bill. Heather Bruskin asked if this bill specifies how the grant program would be administered (for future Council reports and recommendations)
- iv. [HB0857](#) - Education - Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program - School Lunch.
Michael J. gave an explanation of this bill, which would provide additional State funding for schools to provide meals. Anne Palmer suggested supporting this bill as long as Michael J. offers to draft testimony; no objections.
- v. [SB755](#) - Infrastructure Grants - Federal Infrastructure Investment and Coordination Unit - Established.
Anna gave an update on this bill and noted that there are some indirect



links to FSRC-related topics, such as cold storage.

Michael J. suggested monitoring the bill; no objections.

Heather asked if there was anything in the bill that would help local governments leverage federal funds for infrastructure; Anna replied that it seems to be mostly focused on state agencies and nonprofits. Sydney said that it seems there might be some opportunities down the road but that our resources now would be better spent elsewhere.

b. Updates:

i. SB0362 - DHS Update - Ary Amerikaner

Ary Amerikaner gave an update and answered questions on the Virtual Schools legislation, specifically about the food and nutrition services sections. She explained that because schools had to switch to virtual learning over the last two years, this bill will basically codify what districts are already doing.

Michael J. asked if the P-EBT applied for recently by schools would also apply to virtual schools; Ary will look into it and get back to the subcommittee.

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