

# **Farm to Food Security Act HB147**

## *Maryland Food for Maryland Families*

Introduced by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Lorig Charkoudian

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the necessity for a strong and resilient food system that, at any given moment, can provide a sufficient supply of affordable, nutritious food to Maryland residents. Agriculture represents Maryland's largest commercial industry, employing more than 350,000 residents including 6,000 full-time farmers, and contributing more than \$8 billion annually to the state's economy. And while actors throughout the state took unprecedented actions to support those in need, nearly 750,000 Marylanders still struggle to access their next meal. A shift to a more sustainable, localized food system can help to utilize the strength of Maryland agriculture, farms, and people power to strengthen supply chains, build up local farm, and bring equity to consumption and access.

**The Farm to Food Security Act invests in three programs to enhance resiliency and reduce food insecurity:**

- 1. Increasing Maryland Market Money**
- 2. Piloting a Farm to School grant program**
- 3. Creating the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM)**

### **Expanding the Reach of Maryland Market Money (MMM)**

MMM matches SNAP and WIC benefits used at Maryland farmers markets. The program reduce barriers to healthy foods, improves economic viability of Maryland farmers, and diversifies the customer base of farmers markets. Since its inception in 2013, the program has provided more than \$1 million in matching funds to alleviate food insecurity. MMM currently receives \$100,000 annually from the state. The Farm to Food Security Act would increase the state allocation to \$300,000 and will put more money in the hands of food insecure shoppers, markets, and farmers in the state of Maryland.

### **Launching the Farm to School Grant Pilot**

Gleaning from the insights of successful programs, administrators, and advocates in Michigan, New York, and California—the Farm to School Pilot Grant program would allow Maryland school districts to apply for grants of 20 cents for every meal served that includes a Maryland food component. Farm-to-school initiatives in Maryland currently receive no state allocated funding or staffing for this purpose. Counties and school districts throughout Maryland have expressed a desire and need for this pilot program that would entrench, instill, and incentivize the longstanding purchase and provision of Maryland food on the plates of our next generation of Marylanders. This pilot would allocate \$500,000 across applicant school districts to further instill local, healthy food for Maryland's school children.

### **Creating the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM)**

MD FARM, modeled after successful programs in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, New York, and Virginia would help mitigate the economic hardships and supply chain issues of COVID-19, by supporting emergency food providers to leverage Maryland agriculture long after the pandemic. MD FARM would ensure that locally sourced produce, products, and services are utilized to allow emergency food providers to: purchase surplus product, cover costs of distribution and processing, arrange contract growing, or assemble and create food boxes. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will administer \$1.25 million to support Maryland-based procurement, harvesting, contracting, distribution, or processing for hunger relief efforts throughout the state.

*For more information and/or questions please contact:*

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