



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: January 25, 2022

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 121

SHORT TITLE: Maryland Farms and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program, and Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program – Alterations and Establishment

MDA POSITION: Information

EXPLANATION:

SB 121 would do three main things:

1. Increase the Maryland Market Money from \$100,000 annually to \$300,000 annually;
2. Create a pilot for a Farm to School grant program, which would allow Maryland school districts to apply for grants of \$0.20 for every meal served that includes a Maryland food component; and
3. Create the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM) for the purpose of providing grants to food banks and charitable emergency food providers. MD FARM would be administered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA).

This legislation requires the Governor to include an appropriation of \$1,250,000 for the MD FARM fund.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The current Maryland Farms and Families grant program aims to double the purchasing power of residents using federal nutrition benefits at farmers markets throughout the state. The program provides access to fresh fruits and vegetables for food-insecure Marylanders, while increasing revenues for farmers markets.

Grants are used to match purchases made using checks from the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Women, Infants and Children

benefits. The program awards up to \$100,000 to nonprofit organizations with the capacity to run this program.

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) and the Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) are the current recipients of the Maryland Farms and Families grant, which is used to fund the Maryland Money Market. The Maryland Money Market is a state-wide currency distributed to shoppers at select farmers markets who participate in federal nutrition benefits programs.

The Maryland Farm to School program is sponsored by the Maryland Department of Agriculture in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Maryland schools spent \$18 million on local food served in schools according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm to School Census. Maryland was the first state in the nation to have every public school system participate in the Maryland Homegrown School Lunch, an element of the Maryland Farm to School program.

In Maryland, there are more than 2 million acres in farmland and more than 12,000 farms. More than 70 million lunches and 24 million breakfasts are served in Maryland schools annually. Maryland Farm to School is not the federally-funded Childhood Nutrition Programs, but locally sourced Maryland foods can be a part of the Breakfast, School Lunch, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Summer Meals, Maryland Meals for Achievement, etc.

If you have additional questions, please contact Cassie Shirk, Director of Legislation and Governmental Affairs, at cassie.shirk@maryland.gov or 410-841-5886.