



**SIERRA
CLUB**

7338 Baltimore Ave
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Committee: Health and Government Operations

Testimony on: HB317 - “Maryland Green Purchasing Committee - Food and Beverage Procurement - Greenhouse Gas Emissions”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: January 21, 2021

The Maryland Sierra Club submits this testimony in strong support of HB317. The bill adds an important additional tool for Maryland to address the climate crisis by providing a path by which the state can mitigate emissions associated with its food purchases.

Specifically, the bill requires the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee to develop a methodology for estimating the life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of foods purchased by state agencies, and establish best practices to reduce these emissions over the next decade. The bill also sets a goal for emissions reductions. Reducing our state’s greenhouse gas emissions requires many actions. This bill offers climate benefits and, in addition, cost savings to taxpayers and improvements in public health: a true win-win.

Agriculture is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gases, contributing 20 to 30 percent or more, depending on the study and definitions.^{1 2} Globally, meat and dairy production alone account for as much as all cars, trucks, ships, and planes.³ Through conscious choices, including greater reliance on plant-based proteins and lower impact animal-based sources, the state may significantly reduce the impact of food purchases and consumption on the climate.⁴ Moreover, 20 percent of food nationwide is wasted. Our institutions can reduce waste, promote composting, and partner with community entities that provide unused food to shelters and needy families. Other governmental units, including hospitals, schools, and county jails have saved money from this type of thoughtful procurement, while simultaneously providing health benefits and increased consumer satisfaction.⁵

The bill also offers considerable potential for leveraging additional impacts. First, it will signal to major private food-service providers that greenhouse gas labeling and procurement is desired by a major purchaser. Second, it will demonstrate for private universities, local school districts, hospitals, and other large buyers not covered by the bill that there is a feasible approach to benefit the environment, save money, and provide health and related benefits. Third, by demonstrating healthy and sustainable food choices in our institutions, the bill will help families adopt fulfilling and sustainable dietary patterns.

This is genuinely a case where leadership by Maryland can have potentially far-reaching benefits. We strongly urge your support for this bill.

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¹ <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-environ-020411-130608>

² https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/08/2f.-Chapter-5_FINAL.pdf

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/30/dining/climate-change-food-eating-habits.html>

⁴ <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/360/6392/987>

⁵ <https://www.ecowatch.com/kids-lunch-climate-change-2280516131.html>

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.