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**Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**Testimony on: SB 121- 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**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: January 25, 2022**

The Maryland Sierra Club urges support of this legislation that will further the existing goals of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council by increasing funding for the Maryland Farms and Families Fund, beginning in fiscal year 2024, and establishing two new related programs. Both the proposed “Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program” and the “Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program” would help address the current food security crisis our state is facing and promote the sustainability of our local agricultural system.

The “Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program” would encourage the procurement of local agriculture by organizations that address food scarcity and provide emergency food distribution (such as food banks and emergency shelters).

The “Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program” would provide funding to school systems that run a federally reimbursed food program to help them buy the healthier, but sometimes slightly higher priced, produce grown locally.

As our state faces the challenges of addressing food shortages, providing nutritious school meals, and encouraging sustainable agriculture, we welcome solutions like those offered by SB 121. The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club encourages you to approve SB 121.

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