
**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER (FARM) POLICY
COMMITTEE****MEETING SUMMARY (DRAFT)****DECEMBER 9, 2022**

All presentations from the meeting, and the approved October meeting summary, can be found at: <https://www.mwcog.org/events/2022/12/9/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-policy-committee/>

DECISIONS AND ACTIONS:

- Short Term
 - FARM members approved the October meeting summary with a quorum.
 - Vice Chair Stehle presented draft food and agriculture legislative priorities for consideration by the COG Board in its annual legislative priority adoption process. He directed staff to make changes recommended by FARM.

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL

- District of Columbia Councilmember Mary Cheh, FARM Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:02 am.
- FARM members approved the October draft meeting summary with a quorum.
- Chair Cheh shared that on Monday, December 5th, the Chair and Vice Chairs sent a letter to the region's Congressional delegation.
 - Shared the COG Board's Resolution calling on Congress to make the Child Tax Credit permanent and to provide a pathway for universal, free school meals.
 - It also expressed support for the Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act which is the Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization Bill and asked that these priorities be included in any end of year Omnibus Appropriations bill.
 - This was an outstanding action item for FARM.

FEDERAL UPDATE ON FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

- Ellen Teller, Director of Government Affairs at the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) talked about changes in Congress – current and upcoming – and how an end of year spending bill could shape up.
- Teller discussed issues of importance to COG and to FARM, including the Child Tax Credit and Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) and what could make it in to the Appropriations Bill.
- Virginia Representative Bobby Scott passed CNR out of the House Education and Labor

Committee.

- The multi-year bill likely costs around \$100 billion dollars
- Needs to be deficit neutral when it goes to Senate
- Key pieces of CNR are being prioritized such as a summer EBT program, WIC modernization, getting an additional meal for the CACFP program, changes to summer meal programs in rural areas, etc.
 - There seems to be bipartisan support for these.
- Healthy Meals for All does not have bipartisan support and will not be included.
 - Advocates and some members of Congress are pushing for expanding the Community Eligibility Provision instead so that more schools with a certain percentage of low-income children can serve free meals to all students.
 - Teller explained three different ways this could be expanded.
- CNR will not be taken up next year and compete with the Farm Bill.
 - It's important to get key provisions into the end of year Appropriations Bill.
- FARM Members spent some time discussing what it could mean to have CEP statewide.
 - Michael J Wilson talked about what some states are doing to support Healthy Meals for All and what is happening in Maryland to better measure poverty and increase access to free meals.
- Cassie Edner, Public Benefits Attorney and Virginia Hunger Solutions, Director at Virginia Poverty Law Center discussed how federal changes to school meals could help in the Commonwealth.
 - A Summer EBT Program would also be really helpful. Particularly in rural communities, it can be very difficult to get to free summer meal sites.
 - A priority for the legislative session is to increase the SNAP minimum benefit, particularly for seniors.
 - They will be especially impacted when SNAP Emergency Allotments expire.
- LaMonika Jones, Interim Director at DC Hunger Solutions, shared a number of initiatives they are working on, including to support DC's state agencies. A few of these include:
 - WIC modernization
 - Introducing a Healthy Meals for All Bill
 - Senior Hunger
- Ms. Jones also shared how some of DC's local laws and programs already provide for meal benefits to children that are being sought federally.
- Julia Gross at Maryland Hunger Solutions provided a brief preview of priorities for the Maryland legislative session including: Healthy Meals for All, full funding for Maryland Meals for Achievement, protection and reimbursement for funds stolen from SNAP participants through fraudulent activities, and expanding Categorical Eligibility to enroll qualifying residents for programs they're eligible for.

FARM BILL 101

Emma Scott, Clinical Instructor in the Food Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School, provided a high-level overview of the titles in the U.S. FARM Bill which is set to expire next September.

Ms Scott's presentation is available at <https://www.mwcog.org/events/2022/12/9/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-policy-committee/>

FARM MEMBER BUSINESS: LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES AND OTHER UPDATES

Councilmember Stehle, FARM Vice Chair and FARM Member Michael J Wilson discussed some changes to recommended language for the draft 2023 food and agriculture legislative priorities for consideration by the COG Board its annual legislative priority adoption process.

Vice Chair Stehle explained the next steps in the process for sharing these priorities with the Board.

Action Item: He directed staff to make changes recommended by FARM member, Zachari Curtis.

Lauren DeSimone gave an update on the region's USDA Regional Food Business Centers application.

YEAR IN REVIEW AND LOOKING AHEAD

Chair Cheh reviewed several FARM milestones from 2022. She also provided some thoughts on work ahead to improve food security and strengthen the region's food system.

Vice Chair Stehle thanked Councilmember Cheh and Councilmember Rice for their leadership of FARM for the last two years, as well as their staff. He thanked several other founding members of FARM as well.

Vice Chair Stehle provided the schedule for 2024 FARM Policy Committee meetings.

Chair Cheh encouraged members to attend COG's December Annual Meeting.

This is Councilmember Cheh's last meeting as Chair. Councilmember Rice left office mid-day on Monday.

ADJOURN

Mary Cheh, FARM Chair, adjourned the meeting at 12:52 pm.

ATTENDANCE:

Mary Cheh, Chair, District of Columbia
Jon Stehle, Vice Chair, City of Fairfax
Kate Kennedy, City of College Park
Matt de Ferranti, Arlington County (alternate)
Penny Gross, Fairfax County
Kenny Boddy, Prince William County
Ruben Collins, III, Charles County (alternate)
Cesar Cucufate, City of Laurel
Maria Mackie, City of College Park (alternate)
Carrol McBryde, City of Bladensburg
Tom Ross, City of Fairfax (alternate)
Ona Balkus, DC Food Policy Council

Heather Bruskin, Montgomery County Food Council
Jeremy Criss, Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
Zachari Curtis, MAFRAC Advisory Board
Meredith Ledlie Johnson, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Selena Mendy Singleton, Montgomery County Council (alternate)
Nick Stavely, FRESHFARM (alternate)
Sara Pollock Hoverter, Georgetown University
Victoria Treski, Bainum Family Foundation
Chris Van Vlack, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District
Bridget Warren, Prince George's County Office of Food Security
Michael J Wilson, Maryland Hunger Solutions
Julia Gross, Maryland Hunger Solutions (alternate)

Ariel Ardura, Office of Councilmember Cheh
Alex Cordova, USDA
Blake Turpin, DC Hunger Solutions
Devora Kimelman-Block, Fair Farms
Eleni Rigsby, Capital Area Food Bank
Gillian Kimura, Capital Area Food Bank
Kimberly Haun, Arlington County
Leah Williams-Rumbley, Food Bank of SE VA and Eastern Shore
Max Broad DCVFA
Renee Catacalos, SAFSF
Stephanie Hopkins, Arlington County
Maryam Taysir, Emerson Hunger Fellow
Isabella Dresser, Emerson Hunger Fellow
Four call-in participants

Speakers

Ellen Teller, Director of Government Affairs, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)
LaMonika Jones, Interim Director, DC Hunger Solutions
Cassie Edner, Public Benefits Attorney and Virginia Hunger Solutions, Director, Virginia Poverty Law Center
Julia Gross, Maryland Hunger Solutions
Emma Scott, Clinical Instructor, Food Law and Policy Clinic, Harvard Law School
Lauren DeSimone, Food System Financing Advisor, Virginia Community Capital

COG Staff

Steve Bieber
Christine Howard
Brian LeCouteur
Wyetha Lipford
Lindsay Smith