



March 3, 2022

The Honorable Janet D. Howell  
Chair, Finance and Appropriations  
Senate of Virginia

The Honorable Barry D. Knight  
Chair, Appropriations  
The Virginia House of Delegates

RE: Request for Inclusion of Food System Priorities in Reconciled Budget for the 2022 - 2024 Biennium

Dear Senator Howell, Delegate Knight, and Members of the Budget Conference Committee:

On behalf of the [Food and Regional Agriculture Member \(FARM\) Policy Committee](#) of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), we are writing to ask you to include several food system priorities in the Reconciled Budget for the 2022 to 2024 Biennium.

As the association of local governments in the metropolitan Washington region, COG supports measures that will increase food security and healthy food access, and support small farmers, including farmers identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and food system resiliency.

We are glad the Senate included two million dollars in funding for Virginia Fresh Match (VFM). We request you include VFM *in both HB30 and SB30* as it relates to the reconciled budget. Both the District of Columbia and Maryland provide state support to programs that increase low-income residents' access to healthy, fresh local and regional food at farmers markets. We hope that Virginia will do the same.

In addition to VFM, we urge additional support to The Virginia Food Access Investment Fund (VFAIF). VFAIF's grants support important upgrades and or expansions of grocery stores, small food retailers, and other innovative food retail projects in historically marginalized and disinvested communities. We also urge the House and Senate to include additional funding across the biennium for VFAIF in the reconciled budget. Investments in VFM and VFAIF are concrete ways we can reduce food insecurity while enhancing food system resiliency in Virginia and metropolitan Washington.

2022 Senator Howell, Delegate Knight, and Members of the Budget Conference Committee  
March 1, 2022

Please contact Lindsay Smith, COG's Regional Food Systems Planner, at (202) 962-3309 or [lsmith@mwkog.org](mailto:lsmith@mwkog.org) if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

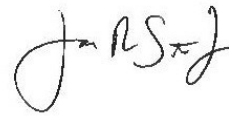
Sincerely,



Mary Cheh  
Chair, FARM Committee  
District of Columbia



Craig Rice  
Vice Chair, FARM Committee  
Montgomery County, MD



Jon Stehle  
Vice Chair, FARM Committee  
City of Fairfax, VA

C: Senator Barker, Senator Hanger, Senator Locke, Senator Lucas, Senator Newman, Senator Norment, Senator Saslaw, Delegate Austin, Delegate Bloxom, Delegate Brewer, Delegate Torian, Delegate Sickles