



June 17, 2024

Montgomery County Council President
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

MONTGOMERY COUNTY FOOD COUNCIL TESTIMONY: Child Investment Fund

The Montgomery County Food Council is pleased to offer our enthusiastic support for Bill 5-24, the Child Investment Fund. We would like to thank Councilmembers Jawando and Albornoz for co-sponsoring this important legislation.

While Montgomery County is considered by some measures to be one of the wealthiest in the nation, swaths of the County experience deep poverty and great need. The Capital Area Food Bank's 2023 Hunger Report estimates that approximately 27% of Montgomery County residents experience food insecurity. Of those, 67% identified as Black, Hispanic, or a race other than White, highlighting the disproportional impact of food insecurity due to historic and systematic racial injustice. Feeding America also estimates that 13.9% of all children in Montgomery County face food insecurity. Roughly half of children living in households below the federal poverty level speak languages other than English at home, with 35% living in Spanish speaking households.

The Food Council supports food sovereignty and is dedicated to ensuring that the food system is equitable, accessible, and inclusive for all County residents. Critical to our work in this area is promoting long-term solutions to food insecurity through enrollment in federal nutrition benefits. Through these direct services, we have heard first-hand about the struggles of families to afford not just groceries, but other life-sustaining expenses such as housing, healthcare, and childcare.

The County's recent Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger recognized that childhood food insecurity is a symptom of deeper systemic inequities, the primary root cause being that many children in our community live in households with insufficient income to purchase adequate healthy food. The Child Investment Fund is a critical step in addressing the fundamental needs of our youngest community members in a way that provides real long-term economic opportunity

coupled with sustained investment in our community. This progressive approach will help dismantle systemic barriers to wealth accumulation, enabling all residents to participate fully in our local economy.

We commend the Council for its leadership in proposing this forward-thinking legislation and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on our community.

For more information, please contact Michelle Caruso, Director of Policy and Partnerships, at michelle@mocofoodcouncil.org.