

# SENATE BILL 353

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By: **Senators Salling and Watson**

Introduced and read first time: January 16, 2025

Assigned to: Finance

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Food Deserts Workgroup – Establishment**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Food Deserts Workgroup to study and make  
4 recommendations regarding solutions to eliminate food deserts in the State; and  
5 generally relating to the Food Deserts Workgroup.

6 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

7 That:

8 (a) There is a Food Deserts Workgroup.

9 (b) The Workgroup consists of the following members:

10 (1) two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of  
11 the Senate;

12 (2) two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of  
13 the House;

14 (3) the Secretary of Aging, or the Secretary's designee;

15 (4) the Secretary of Agriculture, or the Secretary's designee;

16 (5) the Secretary of Commerce, or the Secretary's designee;

17 (6) the Secretary of Health, or the Secretary's designee;

18 (7) the Secretary of Housing and Community Development, or the  
19 Secretary's designee;

20 (8) the Secretary of Human Services, or the Secretary's designee;

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (9) the Secretary of Planning, or the Secretary's designee;

2 (10) the State Superintendent of Schools, or the State Superintendent's  
3 designee;

4 (11) one member of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council,  
5 designated by the Secretary of Emergency Management;

6 (12) one representative of the Maryland Municipal League, designated by  
7 the Chief Executive Officer of the Maryland Municipal League; and

8 (13) the following representatives of the Maryland Association of Counties,  
9 designated by the Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Counties:

10 (i) one representative from a rural county;

11 (ii) one representative from a suburban county; and

12 (iii) one representative from Baltimore City.

13 (c) The members of the Workgroup shall elect the chair of the Workgroup.

14 (d) The Department of Housing and Community Development shall provide staff  
15 for the Workgroup.

16 (e) A member of the Workgroup:

17 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Workgroup; but

18 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State  
19 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

20 (f) The Workgroup shall:

21 (1) conduct an analysis of food deserts in the State that includes:

22 (i) a discussion of the overall concept of food deserts and the location  
23 of food deserts in the State;

24 (ii) an examination of the health impacts of food deserts on the local  
25 population, including any related environmental concerns, and the impacts of food deserts  
26 on the economy;

27 (iii) an assessment of strategies to attract grocery stores and  
28 supermarket retailers to identified food deserts and any associated costs, including a review

1 of existing incentives and available financing programs in this State and in other states;  
2 and

3 (iv) any other topic, as determined by the Workgroup, related to food  
4 deserts; and

5 (2) prepare a report that includes:

6 (i) key findings from the Workgroup's analysis conducted under  
7 paragraph (1) of this subsection; and

8 (ii) recommendations regarding solutions to eliminate food deserts  
9 in the State.

10 (g) On or before November 1, 2025, the Workgroup shall submit the report of its  
11 findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the  
12 State Government Article, the General Assembly, the Senate Committee on Education,  
13 Energy, and the Environment, the Senate Finance Committee, the House Economic  
14 Matters Committee, and the House Environment and Transportation Committee.

15 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
16 1, 2025. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and, at the end of June 30, 2026, this  
17 Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no  
18 further force and effect.