


F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner	Health Department  AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject: Position:	20-0231R – Informational Hearing – Bringing Back Victory Gardens Favorable		

To: President and Members  
of the City Council  
c/o 409 City Hall

August 5, 2020

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #20-0231R, entitled, “Informational Hearing – Bringing Back Victory Gardens.” The purpose of this legislation is to call on several Baltimore City agencies to discuss the role of community gardens in addressing COVID-19-related needs and in greening the City.

Food insecurity has become an even faster growing concern within Baltimore City since the initial spread of COVID-19. Escalating unemployment and increasing reliance on governmental and philanthropic institutions have prompted BCHD to take unprecedented steps to ensure food access. For the City’s older adults, BCHD has partnered with several entities including Amazon, Meals on Wheels, and the Salvation Army to deliver over 10,000 meals per day. BCHD has also worked with local food pantries to provide groceries and hot meals to City residents in need.

Even prior to the City’s first COVID-19 cases, BCHD had been working for years, and continues to work, on food security policies and initiatives. For example, BCHD’s Food Nutrition at Corner Stores program has worked with communities at their local markets on eating healthier through the purchase of fruits, vegetables, and other foods to create wholesome, complete meals. Moreover, at its inception, the Virtual Supermarket program allowed residents in healthy food priority areas to purchase their food through online ordering with community drop-offs and delivery to nine senior sites in West Baltimore.

The above programs intended to tackle food insecurity could be greatly supplemented by sustainable, both from an ecological and fiscal standpoint, community gardens providing nutritious fruits and vegetables to Baltimore City residents in need. Understanding the necessity for novel approaches to address the many community needs being made worse by COVID-19, BCHD requests a **favorable** report on Council Bill #20-0231R.