

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORT
2024 Legislative Session

Reference No.: CR-006-2024
Draft No.: 2
Committee: Health, Human Services, and Public Safety
Date: October 17, 2024
Action: FAV(A)

REPORT:

Committee Vote: Favorable, with Amendments 5-0 (In favor: Council Members Fisher, Blegay, Hawkins, Olson, and Watson)

The Health, Human Services, and Public Safety Committee convened on October 17, 2024, to consider CR-006-2024 Draft 2.

Leroy Maddox, Legislative Attorney, reviewed the amendments in CR-006-2024 Draft 2. On page 1, lines 4 through 5, the references to the State of Maryland Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Maryland Commission on Correctional Standards have been removed.

Also, on page 1, line 18, the timeline for convening the task force has been extended. Initially, the County Executive and the County Council were to convene the task force within 90 days; this has now been changed to 120 days.

On page 3, lines 4 through 12 outlined four guidelines for meal programs aligned with the Center for Good Food Purchasing's Good Food Program (GFPP) meal programs.

Page 3, line 18, emphasizes that within two years of its formation, the task force must submit a report to the County Executive and Council, identifying steps and funding sources for various initiatives. These include partnering with local hospitality, culinary arts, agriculture, and education programs, exploring the

feasibility of a central dining area, and introducing nutrition and health education programs.

On pages 4 through 5, several “BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED” sections focus on establishing minimum standards for the Department of Corrections regarding food security, meal delivery, and related procedures. The resolution mandates collaboration between the Department of Corrections and Health to update nutrition standards. Additionally, the Department of Corrections must undergo a baseline assessment by the Center of Good Food Purchasing one year after the law’s enactment and annual assessments thereafter to ensure alignment with the Good Food Purchasing Program’s core values.

Dinora Hernandez, Office of Law, requests additional time to review proposed Draft 2. She also raised a question about a provision that exempts the task force from being considered a public body under the Open Meeting Act. Council Member Oriadha expressed no opposition to adding the provision if needed.

Sakinda Skinner, Council Liaison, Office of the County Executive, expressed gratitude, noting that the proposed legislation involves the Board of Health, reflected in the “BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED” clause on page 3, line 14. Ms. Skinner expressed concerns about adding new requirements for the Department of Corrections, specifically procuring food consistent with the Good Food Purchasing Program. She also questioned the feasibility of the urban farm initiative and emphasized that the Department of Corrections needs to review these provisions.

Council Member Oriadha, the sponsor, expressed that she appreciates the advocates who have worked on this legislation for two years, particularly those from Life After Release and the coalition advocating for improved food standards. She noted that the legislation establishes a framework for setting standards over varying timelines, stressing the need for the Department of Corrections to improve its practices.

Council Member Fisher, Committee Chair, asked about the task force's composition, specifically how the task force chair is determined. She also expressed concerns about two individuals currently incarcerated in a correctional facility. She expressed concerns about the logistics of their participation, suggesting that engaging them may be challenging.

Council Member Oriadha stated that the members would determine the task force Chair. She acknowledged the progress made in correctional facilities with virtual access and hoped technology could facilitate their representation.

Chair Fisher questioned whether the meal standards identified on page 3, beginning on line 4, were mandatory. The Legislative Attorney indicated that they were. She further explained that finding a vendor within the county's budget may be challenging in meeting those standards. Chair Fisher requested that the sponsor be flexible and open regarding the standards for the meal program.

Council Member Oridaha stated that these standards are intended as goals to be achieved, with the task force expected to provide recommendations within a year, on which the Council will vote.

Vice Chair Hawkins motioned to move favorably, seconded by Blegay.

The Health, Human Services and Public Safety Committee voted 5-0 favorable on CR-006-2024 Draft 2.

The Health, Human Services, and Public Safety Committee convened on March 21, 2024, to consider CR-006-2024.

The resolution aims to establish a Healthy Food Prince George's County Correctional Facilities Task Force. The Task Force is responsible for delivering recommendations to the County Council and Board of Health regarding nutritional and other standards for incarcerated individuals at the Prince George's County Correctional Facility. This initiative addresses concerns about nutritional disparities among imprisoned individuals in the facility.

As outlined in the resolution on page 2, the Healthy Food in Prince George's County Correctional Facilities Task Force will consist of fourteen members and provide a report within a year of its convening.

The Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact statement indicates that adopting CR-006-2024 will likely have a slight adverse fiscal impact, requiring some administrative expenditures for staffing and technical supplies for operations. As with other Council-created task forces, the existing legislative branch budget is expected to absorb this additional cost.

Adoption of CR-006-2024 may have a favorable indirect fiscal impact as improvements to the nutritional framework may reduce County expenditures on health care overall.

The sponsor, Council Member Oriadha, moved to hold CR-006-2024. The Health, Human Services, and Public Safety Committee voted favorably 4-0 to hold.