

Items discussed during 2024 meetings of the Commission to End Hunger

Last interim, the Commission members discussed the concept of "food as medicine" as a means of addressing access to nutritious food and reducing malnutrition or conditions relating to inadequate access to food that meets specific individual's nutritional needs. The Commission members discussed HB1106 (Del. McQuinn) (2022) (based on the 2022 report published by the Department of Social Services pursuant to HB 2065 (2021 Spec. Sess. I)) establishing the Produce Rx Program as a three-year pilot program to incentivize consumption of qualifying fruits and vegetables by eligible individuals for whom increased consumption of fruits and vegetables is recommended by a qualified care provider.

The Commission members noted concerns about whether, as a formal recommendation, legislation to this effect would be more appropriate coming from a Commission focused on health care. However, the Commission members agreed that it was an important issue and wanted to ensure that the Commission signaled its support and recommended that the General Assembly do the same for any legislation introduced during the 2025 Session to that effect.

In previous meetings, the Commission members discussed successful legislative efforts in other states that established universal free school lunches as well as Senator Roem's SB 283 (2024) which, as introduced, sought to do so.

In the November meeting, members emphasized the importance of establishing universal free school lunches in public schools in the Commonwealth. Several members agreed that it was important to support any legislative efforts to do so in the 2025 Session.