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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 447

Offered January 13, 2025

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*Directing the Virginia Commission to End Hunger to establish a statewide food desert mapping tool. Report.*

Patrons—Anthony, Cousins, Price, Thomas, Rasoul and Shin

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a food desert as a geographic area where residents lack access to affordable, nutritious foods, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables and other whole foods; and

WHEREAS, the term "food apartheid" means those systemic and structural inequities in food access that result from historical and ongoing discriminatory practices and have a disproportionate effect on low-income communities; and

WHEREAS, food deserts and food apartheid zones contribute to significant disparities in health, economic opportunities, and community well-being across the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, food access barriers, such as a lack of grocery stores in communities with limited public transportation options, impede a community's ability to obtain affordable, nutritious foods; and

WHEREAS, up-to-date data-driven insights into barriers to food access are essential in guiding policy decisions, allocating resources equitably, and supporting targeted interventions; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly last commissioned a study of food deserts in the Commonwealth in 2013; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Commission to End Hunger (the Commission) be directed to establish a statewide food desert mapping tool (the mapping tool). The Commission shall use geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic data to identify food deserts and food apartheid zones in the Commonwealth in order to create a comprehensive and actionable mapping tool. Information and data from existing studies and reports that address food insecurity within the Commonwealth shall also be incorporated into the mapping tool to enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the mapping tool. In establishing the mapping tool, the Commission shall collaborate with the Department of Health, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Department of Social Services; universities and research institutions with expertise in public health, social sciences, and geographic information system (GIS) mapping technology; and nonprofit organizations working within the Commonwealth to address food access and food equity. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Automated Systems.

The Virginia Commission to End Hunger shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of its progress in meeting the directive of this resolution no later than the first day of the 2026 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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