



## FRESHFARM Contact

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## FRESHFARM Names Former White House Public Health Advisor, Catherine Oakar, as Executive Director

*Catherine (Cat) Oakar, a twenty-year veteran in food & public health policy, will lead the Mid-Atlantic region's largest food system organization*

Washington, DC, (June 25, 2025)—Today [FRESHFARM](#) announced that **Catherine (Cat) Oakar** will serve as the nonprofit's next **Executive Director** starting Monday, August 11th. Oakar's twenty-year food and health policy career at the national, state, and local levels uniquely positions her to further FRESHFARM's mission of creating a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Oakar most recently served as Special Assistant to the President for Public Health and Disparities in the Domestic Policy Council at the White House, overseeing President Biden's public health policy agenda. She also served on the Biden-Harris Transition team, managing the hiring of all non-Senate confirmed Presidential appointees for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). During the Obama Administration, Oakar served at the White House as the Associate Director of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative to reduce childhood obesity and as a Senior Advisor in the Office of National AIDS Policy. She was also the Director of Public Health Policy in the Office of Health Reform at HHS and holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Michigan's prestigious School of Public Health.

"Appointing Cat Oakar as FRESHFARM's next Executive Director marks a defining moment in our organization's history," said **Board Chair Jessica Zetzman**. "Cat is a nationally respected leader with deep roots in public health and food policy, and her experience shaping systems-level change at the highest levels of government ideally situates her to lead FRESHFARM forward. Her appointment signals our deepening commitment to advancing equitable food systems that nourish our food future."

Oakar joins FRESHFARM at a critical moment. FRESHFARM is a lifeline for local growers and the communities they sustain. FRESHFARM maintains the largest regional network of **26 farmers markets and farm stands** supporting over **240 farmers and producers**, and annually distributes hundreds of thousands of pounds of fresh, local produce to underserved communities through the **Pop-Up Food Hub**. FRESHFARM's **FreshMatch** and **Produce Plus** food access programs make fresh food affordable for thousands of families, while **FoodPrints**, the organization's signature food and garden education initiative, reaches over **8,000 students across 21 DC public elementary schools**.

"I've spent my entire career at the intersection of food, health, and equity. I believe deeply that access to fresh, nourishing food is a basic human right, not a privilege," shares Oakar. "As a longtime Washington, DC resident, FRESHFARM has always stood out as a powerful example of what's possible when we put community, food, and public health first. I am honored to join FRESHFARM at such a pivotal time. I'm excited to work alongside the extraordinary FRESHFARM team, farmers, producers, shoppers, schools, and community members to continue building a vibrant, equitable, and resilient local food system across DC, Maryland, and Virginia. "

As demand for our programs grows and the broader policy landscape shifts, Oakar's experience and vision will be instrumental in guiding FRESHFARM forward. Under Oakar's leadership, FRESHFARM will continue to strengthen the local food economy, expand equitable food access, and deliver transformative food education to the next generation.

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**About FRESHFARM:**

FRESHFARM is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit that builds a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system in the Mid-Atlantic region by producing innovative solutions in partnership with local communities and organizations. We create food access, economic development, and thriving communities through hands-on education, farmers markets, and food distribution programs. [Learn more.](#)