

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

Senate Bill 767

(Senator Washington)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Appropriations

Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Established

This bill establishes the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program for public institutions of higher education administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). MHEC must allocate grant funding to any public institution or regional higher education center (RHEC) that pledges a matching contribution to be used to implement the goals of the program and is designated as a hunger-free campus, according to the standards set in the bill. Beginning in fiscal 2023, the Governor must include \$150,000 annually in the budget for the program. MHEC must incorporate a plan for addressing any basic needs insecurity of higher education students into the 2026-2030 State Plan for Higher Education. Within two years after establishing the program, MHEC must report on the implementation of the bill as specified.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2022; general fund expenditures increase by \$150,000 annually beginning in FY 2023. To the extent public four-year institutions of higher education, Baltimore City Community College (BCCC), and RHECs choose to become hunger-free campuses as defined in the bill, higher education expenditures may increase. Expenditures may be partially offset by grants. **The bill establishes a mandated appropriation beginning in FY 2023.**

(in dollars)	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Higher Ed Rev.	\$0	-	-	-	-
GF Expenditure	\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Higher Ed Exp.	\$0	-	-	-	-
Net Effect	\$0	(\$150,000)	(\$150,000)	(\$150,000)	(\$150,000)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: To the extent local community colleges choose to become hunger-free campuses as defined in the bill, local community college expenditures may increase. Expenditures may be partially offset by grants.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The purpose of the program is to:

- address student hunger;
- leverage more sustainable solutions to address basic food needs on campus;
- raise awareness of services currently offered on campus that address basic food needs; and
- build strategic partnerships at the local, State, and national levels to address food insecurity among students.

Public Two-year Institutions – Qualifications

MHEC must designate as a hunger-free campus any public two-year campus that:

- establishes a hunger task force that meets specified qualifications;
- designates a staff member responsible for assisting students in enrolling in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or connecting students with available outreach partners that can assist students in enrolling the program;
- designates a staff member responsible for informing students participating in federal work-study programs that they are eligible for SNAP;
- participates in an awareness day campaign activity and plans at least one campus awareness event during the National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week;
- provides at least one food pantry on campus, or enables students in need to receive food through a separate, stigma-free arrangement;
- conducts a standardized annual student survey on hunger and submits the results to MHEC; and
- submits an annual report detailing its efforts to address student hunger to MHEC.

Public Four-year Institutions and Regional Higher Education Centers – Qualifications

In addition to the requirements for public two-year institutions, to qualify as a hunger-free campus, a public four-year institution or RHEC must (1) provide options for students to

utilize SNAP benefits at campus retailers or provide students with information on the names and locations of off-campus retailers that accept the benefits and (2) develop and maintain a meal-sharing program that allows students to donate their unused meal plan credits to be distributed to students in need for use in campus dining halls or at an on-campus food pantry, if applicable. MHEC must designate as a hunger-free campus any public four-year campus or RHEC that meets all of the requirements.

Meal-sharing Program at Public Four-year Institutions

Each four-year public institution of higher education may develop its own procedures for a meal-sharing program. Institutions must make specified information about the meal-sharing program publicly available.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

MHEC must determine the amount of each grant issued under the hunger-free program and adopt regulations necessary to implement the requirements of the bill.

The regulations must allow grant recipients to use grant funds flexibly to implement the goals of the program, including giving recipients the ability to (1) support emergency assistance; (2) hire staff to manage initiatives related to the program; and (3) use grant funds for operational activities related to the program.

Current Law: An RHEC is a facility at which at least two institutions of higher education offer classes, consisting of a variety of program offerings and multiple degree levels. RHECs are designed to ensure access to higher education in underserved areas of the State. They provide baccalaureate and graduate programs in places where students do not have access to higher education due to geographical distance, commute time, or the limited capacity of local four-year institutions. There are seven RHECs operating throughout Maryland. The University System of Maryland operates three RHECs (Shady Grove, Hagerstown, and Southern Maryland). The other four independent regional centers are coordinated by MHEC (Arundel Mills, Eastern Shore, Laurel, and Waldorf).

State Fiscal Effect: Beginning in fiscal 2023, general fund expenditures increase by \$150,000 annually. Institutions or RHECs may choose to meet the requirements of the bill to be designated hunger-free campuses so that they are eligible for the grant program established by the bill. To receive a grant, an institution or RHEC must pledge a matching contribution to be used to implement the goals of the program. To the extent they do and their costs to implement these programs are greater than current expenditures for food insecurity programs, higher education expenditures for public four-year institutions, BCCC, and RHECs increase. To receive grant funding, an institution or RHEC must at least meet the matching requirement.

Expenditures for programs may be partially offset by grants received under the program. The amount of funding received by each institution or RHEC depends on the number of institutions or RHECs that qualify as hunger-free campuses and how MHEC decides to distribute the grants. *For illustrative purposes only*, if all 13 traditional public four-year institutions, 7 RHECs, and all 16 community colleges were to qualify and the funding were to be distributed equally, each campus would receive approximately \$4,200 annually.

MHEC can distribute the funding using criteria it develops, produce the required implementation report, and incorporate into the 2026-2030 State Plan for Higher Education a plan for addressing any basic needs insecurity for higher education students using existing resources.

Local Fiscal Effect: Likewise, to the extent local community colleges choose to become hunger-free campuses as defined in the bill, local community college expenditures may increase. To receive grant funding an institution must at least meet the matching requirement. Expenditures may be partially offset by grants received under the program.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: HB 891 (Delegate D.M. Davis) - Appropriations.

Information Source(s): Department of Budget and Management; Department of Human Resources; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Morgan State University; University System of Maryland; Department of Legislative Services

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