

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1175
 Appropriations

(Delegate D.M. Davis, *et al.*)

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 that is designated as a hunger-free campus, according to the standards set in the bill. Beginning in fiscal 2022, the Governor must include \$310,000 annually in the budget for the program. MHEC must incorporate a plan for addressing any basic needs insecurity of higher education students into the 2021-2025 State Strategic 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 2021; general fund expenditures increase by \$310,000 annually beginning in FY 2022. To the extent public four-year institutions of higher education and Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) choose to become hunger-free campuses as defined in the bill, higher education expenditures may increase. Expenditures may be fully or partially offset by grants received under the program. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation beginning in FY 2022.**

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Higher Ed Rev.	\$0	-	-	-	-
GF Expenditure	\$0	\$310,000	\$310,000	\$310,000	\$310,000
Higher Ed Exp.	\$0	-	-	-	-
Net Effect	\$0	(\$310,000)	(\$310,000)	(\$310,000)	(\$310,000)

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 fully or partially offset by grants received under the program.

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 Maryland Food Supplement Program;
- designates a staff member responsible for informing students participating in federal work-study programs that they are eligible for the Maryland Food Supplement Program;
- 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 – Qualifications

In addition to the requirements for public two-year institutions, to qualify as a hunger-free campus, a public four-year institution must (1) provide options for students to utilize Maryland Food Supplement Program benefits at campus stores 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. MHEC must designate as a hunger-free campus any public four-year campus 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.

Current Law/Background: California and New Jersey established similar hunger-free campus grant programs in 2017 and 2019, respectively. These programs are intended to address the growing problem of food insecurity for college students. In December 2018, the U.S. Government Accountability Office released [Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits](#); the report examines (1) what is known about the extent of food insecurity among college students and their use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; (2) how selected colleges are addressing student food insecurity; and (3) the extent to which federal programs assist students experiencing food insecurity. The report noted that estimates of food insecurity among college students ranged from 9% to more than 50%, with 22 of the 31 studies estimating food insecurity rates of more than 30%.

Maryland Food Insecurity Programs on Campuses

Four public institutions of higher education report programs to address food insecurity similar to the hunger-free campus program established by the bill. Other four-year and two-year institutions may also have similar programs.

Frostburg State University (FSU) advises that it has a food pantry on campus and a meal plan donation program. FSU advises that it needs to explore the possibility of using donated meals for the pantry as opposed to only the dining hall.

Salisbury University (SU) advises that it is already compliant with most aspects of the bill, including awareness and access to the “Food for the Flock” pantry. SU also has a program in place for students to donate unused meals. The maximum potential for donated meals for fiscal 2021 is approximately 22,000 meals. However, SU advises that more students are being enrolled in an unlimited meal plan, which does not have a finite number of meals to donate. SU raised the issue of whether the donation of guest passes for students under the unlimited program would suffice to receive funding.

Towson University advises it has one full-time staff member and one graduate assistant working directly with its food insecurity program. The program provides limited funds for meals in the dining hall and some food pantry supplies for student who meet Pell Grant criteria.

Morgan State University advises it has a program similar to that proposed under the bill.

State Plan for Postsecondary Education

MHEC is charged with producing a statewide plan every four years that clearly outlines the priorities and major goals for the State's postsecondary system. The [2017-2021 State Plan for Postsecondary Education: Increasing Student Success with Less Debt](#) fulfills this charge.

State Fiscal Effect: Beginning in fiscal 2022, general fund expenditures increase by \$310,000 annually. Institutions 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 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 and BCCC increase.

Expenditures for programs may be fully or partially offset by grants received under the program. The amount of funding received by each institution depends on the number of institutions 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 and all 16 community colleges were to qualify and the funding were to be distributed equally, each campus would receive approximately \$10,700 annually.

MHEC can distribute the funding using criteria it develops, produce the required implementation report, and incorporate into the 2021-2025 State Strategic 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. Expenditures may be fully or partially offset by grants received under the program.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; Department of Budget and Management; *Inside Higher Ed*; U.S. Government Accountability Office; Department of Legislative Services

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