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Advocates for Children and Youth
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CASH Campaign of Maryland
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Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
Homeless Persons
Representation Project
Job Opportunities Task Force
League of Women Voters of Maryland
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Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Community Action
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Maryland Family Network
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Paul's Place
Public Justice Center
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Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1175

Higher Education – Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

Appropriations

March 5, 2020

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Margo Quinlan, Co-Chairs

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports HB 1175, which requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission to create a Hunger-Free Campus Program at eligible two and four year public institutions in Maryland. The Hunger-Free Campus Program will raise awareness of services available both on and off campus for food-insecure students, establish an on-campus food pantry or other means to receive food, and designate a staff member on campus to assist students with enrolling in Maryland's Food Supplement Program.

College hunger is an issue that has not been addressed as it often goes unseen. However, based on a study done in October 2016 by Students Against Hunger, they noted the 48% of survey respondents reported food insecurity in the last 30 days, with 56% of first-generation students reporting food insecurity as well. Being food insecure is often compounded by other struggles of living in poverty, which can make achieving ones educational goals especially difficult. Establishing the Hunger-Free Campus Program seeks to alleviate some of that burden.

Some college students arrive at their place of higher education having been eligible for free-and-reduced price meals during their time in public school, but no such program exists at the collegiate level. Food insecure students rely on other means to eat the meals they need, some of which may come from food pantries. Ensuring that each institution will provide an on-campus pantry will allow students to quickly receive the assistance they need from a place they trust.

Designating a staff member to assist with navigating the FSP application process will greatly increase FSP participation for eligible students. The application process can be difficult to understand, and having a trusted support system to provide guidance can be critical for participation in a program that is proven to lift people out of poverty.

College students should be worried about their studies, not about their next meal. Enacting HB 1175 provides short-and-long term solutions for these issues, and will lay down the groundwork needed to continue addressing food insecurity in the future.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges a favorable report for HB 1175.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.