



Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition

**Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee  
HB 1175: Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Established  
Position: Favorable**

March 5, 2020

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
Room 121, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
cc: Members, Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair McIntosh and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances economic justice and financial inclusion for Maryland consumers through research, education, direct service, and advocacy. Our 8,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

We are writing today to testify in support of HB 1175.

MCRC works on issues related to college affordability and accessibility. Today, many college students differ from the traditional college student model: that of a young person who enrolled immediately after high school and is financially dependent on their parents.

According to the Congressional Research Service low-income students made up more than 50% of postsecondary student population enrollment across the country.<sup>1</sup> Many students in college today are financially struggling to avoid hunger, pay for medical expenses, and afford their housing while trying to complete their education.

In 2019, the Hope Center conducted a survey of 167,000 students at 227 community colleges and four-year colleges and universities in 44 states and the District of Columbia. The survey found that 39% of college students were food insecure and 46% said they faced some level of housing insecurity.<sup>2</sup> When students are unable to have their basic needs met, they are unable to succeed in school. A recent survey of University of Maryland, College Park students found that 20% of students were food insecure within the last 12 months.<sup>3</sup>

HB 1175 provides a much needed investment in students' most basic needs by supporting two- and four-year college campuses in their efforts to address food insecurity. Maryland colleges and universities have made great efforts to combat food insecurity, but they need additional assistance to deal with this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45686.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/02/20/housing-food-insecurity-affecting-many-college-students-new-data-says/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://today.umd.edu/articles/survey-finds-food-insecurity-among-terps-f8743b73-65d7-458e-8562-534780c2215e>



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Some examples of Maryland colleges addressing campus food insecurity include Towson University and Frostburg State University. Towson University has a dedicated full-time staff member and graduate assistant working directly with its food share program, which provides limited funds for meals in the dining hall and some food pantry supplies for students who meet Pell Grant criteria. Additionally, Frostburg State University Frostburg State University has a food pantry on campus and a meal plan donation program.

HB 1175 will enhance Maryland's two- and four-year institutions' ability to serve students experiencing hunger and food insecurity by requiring that schools establish a hunger task force, conduct a yearly survey to understand the scope of food insecurity on campus, operate a food pantry, inform students of their eligibility for public assistance programs, and raise awareness on food insecurity across campus.

For all these reasons, I urge you to move favorably on HB 1175.

Best,

Dariya Brown  
Student Rights Program Manager