



Welfare Advocates

Founded 1979

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**House Bill 1175
Higher Education – Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program**

**House Appropriations Committee
March 5, 2020**

Support

Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate ourselves, and the wider community and to advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.

Welfare Advocates supports HB 1175, which would establish a Hunger-Free Campus Program at eligible two- and four-year public institutions in Maryland. The Hunger-Free Campus Program will raise awareness and work to end stigma surrounding student hunger and provide on-campus services for those experiencing food insecurity. In order to qualify for the program campuses must establish a hunger task force, hire staff to assist with the Maryland Food Supplement Program (FSP), work to raise awareness on campus, develop a meal-sharing program and establish a food pantry on campus.

Food insecurity on college campuses often goes unseen and its impacts are severe. In 2015, the University of Maryland School of Public Health conducted a survey of nearly 5,000 students and found 20% of respondents were food insecure.¹ Of these students, 40.1% found themselves falling asleep or unable to concentrate in class, 18% missed class in the last 12 months and 12.6% had failed an assignment or exam. Students experiencing food insecurity also had significant physical and mental health impacts: 31.8% reported losing weight because there wasn't enough money for food, 29.1% developed an unhealthy relationship with food, and 46.7% felt down or depressed. Interviews with students indicated self-esteem and social impacts, and food insecurity appeared to limit their ability to network with colleagues or potential employers.

Many of our state two- and four-year public institutions are eager to partner with the state to address and end food insecurity. The University of Maryland has created a Hunger-Free Workgroup to combat food insecurity and its surrounding issues and has opened a campus pantry. University of Maryland, Baltimore County has opened the Retriever Essentials food pantry for students in need and offers a "Save-A-Swipe" program, which consists of a pool of meals for students identified as food insecure. Howard Community College and Community College of Baltimore County have food pantries as well. HB 1175 will create a grant program to assist these institutions with expanding their efforts to end food insecurity on their campuses.

Food insecurity is a social justice issue. While food insecurity can happen to all students, the University of Maryland study showed heightened rates based on a variety of factors. Students who identify as a racial/ethnic minority, international students, and immigrant students all had higher percentages of food insecurity. Of students that were food insecure, 30.6% were lower or lower middle socioeconomic status, 15.6% can rarely or never make ends meet, and 38.4% were personally responsible for more than half of their education costs. These students are not just in school, 49.3% of those experiencing food insecurity were employed, and worked an average of 18.9 hours per week.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1175.

Submitted by Lisa Klingenmaier

¹University of Maryland Counseling Center Research Unit. *UMD Food Access & Student Well-being Study*.
https://studentaffairs.umd.edu/sites/studentaffairs.umd.edu/files/food_access_student_well-being_study_report_september2019.pdf
