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Legislative District 43  
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

*Chair*

Joint Committee on Ending  
Homelessness

*Chair*

Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



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**SUPPORT – SB 767**

**Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program -  
Established**

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 09, 2021

Testimony of Senator Mary Washington

Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully urge you to vote favorable on Senate Bill 767, which establishes the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program to address student hunger and basic food needs on college campuses; requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission to administer the Program, develop a certain form, and designate certain campuses as hunger-free campuses; and authorizes certain public institutions of higher education to develop certain procedures and make certain information publicly available.

Students face unique life challenges including balancing long hours of study with work, internships, personal and family life, all while typically taking on debt from student loans. They must also grapple with rising tuition, living expenses, other education related costs, leaving little resources for food.

A University of Maryland study found that food insecurity and the constant stress from hunger has adverse effects on academic performance as well as physical and mental health, leading to increased risk of dropping out of school before graduating.

It is important to note that food insecurity in higher education **is a widespread issue**: a pre-pandemic nationwide survey by the Hope Center found that among 167,000 students surveyed from 171 two-year and 56 four-year institutions, 39% were food insecure in the prior 30 days.

These are staggering statistics, but even more disheartening is the research analysis conducted by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) that found students of color, older students, former foster youth, parenting students, students who experienced childhood food insecurity, first generation college students, are even more likely than most to experience food insecurity at some point during their studies.

SB 767 aims to create a state-funded matching grant program to provide higher education institutions with funding for programs and initiatives to address food insecurity among their campus community. Grant dollars would be administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Similar legislation has been passed in California and New Jersey, with many other states currently on track to pass Hunger-Free Campus legislation, including Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Washington, Illinois, North Carolina, and New York.

SB767 would enable colleges to buy refrigerators for their food pantries, create SNAP enrollment opportunities, and start a Swipe Out Hunger program, enabling students to donate their leftover meal swipes to their peers who are facing food insecurity on campus.

If Maryland wants to lead the country in education, we must make this critical investment to ensure that students are not forced to suffer hunger or its negative outcomes in their pursuit of higher education.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Senator Mary Washington, District 43, Baltimore City