

Ashlyn Woods
1401 N Charles St,
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The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair of the Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2W Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1990

RE: SUPPORT SB 767 (Washington) — Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

Dear Chair Pinsky and Committee Members,

I am a first-year law student at the University of Baltimore. I am a first-generation college graduate and professional scholar, passionate about advocacy and helping others in my community. Before I started law school, I was an undergraduate student assistant in the University of Baltimore's campus pantry. I am writing this today to offer my support for SB 767 (Washington) -- "Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program.

University of Baltimore's pantry was established to support students, staff, faculty, and alumni by providing wrap-around services like groceries, hygienic items, and even pieces of clothing and school supplies. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Baltimore's pantry distributed between 14,000-16,000 pounds of products each year and, in October of 2019 alone, had more than 1,000 visits.

I took my job very seriously because my position was not just signing people in and out or assisting them with picking the items they needed; most days, I was a confidant and a provider for my community. I ensured that each person was set with their next meal and possibly the only things they would have to eat for the day or the rest of the week.

Many of our clients were only able to visit the pantry once or twice a week, when they may have needed food and supplies well beyond what we could give out each weekly visit. With the enactment of SB 767, the University of Baltimore's campus pantry and other pantries across the University System of Maryland could stay open more days and provide the community with the necessary items to last them until their storm passes.

Maryland needs to enact student anti-hunger legislation because the reality is that people are suffering while trying their hardest to reach the American dream. I've met students and even University of Baltimore staff members who were in suspicious living situations, working full-time, going to school full time, paying bills, taking care of family, and simply struggling to stay alive while being forced to, unfortunately, neglect the most important thing to keep them a part of society – their health.

If this committee and body choose to pass SB 767, it could grant hundreds even thousands of hardworking Maryland students and workers the means to simply eat a decent meal when times get rough. With this bill, campuses all around Maryland can have sufficient campus pantries to support their dedicated students who are struggling in private but somehow manage to pull it together and contribute to our society in a meaningful way every single day.

Sincerely,

Ashlyn Woods
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