

Senate Bill 767
Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program – Established
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 9, 2021

Letter of Information

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 767. This Bill establishes the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program to address student hunger and basic food needs on campus. Components of this Bill include establishing a food pantry and developing a meal sharing program to allow students to donate unused meals from their meal plan to those in need. St. Mary's College seeks to promote the well-being of all students, regardless of their economic status. The College supports the goals of the Bill with respect to reducing hunger on campus.

We have concerns, however, with certain provisions of the Bill. First, the Bill's provisions for sharing unused meals is based on an incorrect assumption that unused meal credits result in substantial amounts of leftover food that could be shared with other students. At St. Mary's College, because we know from history that not all meal credits are used, we are able to buy only the amount of food that students are likely to consume. Consequently, never does the food service vendor purchase enough food to feed 100% of the meals students have purchased.

Meal plans build into their pricing that students do not eat 100% of the meals they could eat under their meal plan. By not buying food that would go unused, the College spends less on food, which is reflected in savings to the students and reduces food waste. Therefore, if the number of meals consumed increases significantly through a donated meal program, then the amount of food prepared will increase, as will the cost. The College would need to pass the cost to the students who do purchase meal plans; contrary to our efforts the last eight years to minimize the student cost of attendance.

Also, several years ago, the College restructured its meal plans in large part to eliminate the majority of unused meals. Approximately two-thirds of our students participate in an "unlimited" meal plan, which allows them to eat at our dining hall as many times a day as they want. Under these plans, there are no "unused" meals that could be donated, except for a limited amount of guest passes.

Finally, the Bill states that unused meals should be used to support a campus food pantry. Because the College does not have any "leftovers," or cost savings from unused meals, it would not be possible to implement this provision. The food pantry on campus collects non-perishable foods from members of the campus community.

Thank you for your continued support of St. Mary's College of Maryland.



Tuajuanda C. Jordan, PhD
President



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