

Testimony in Support of HB 1027 “SNAP for Students”

House Appropriations Committee

February 27, 2022

FAVORABLE

TO: Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Students To End Poverty (STEP)

We are Students to End Poverty. We are based in District 18. We are submitting this testimony in support of HB 1027, the SNAP for Students bill, which would expand SNAP benefits to full-time students who are eligible for but not participating in a federal or state work study program.

Students to End Poverty is a student-run organization based in Montgomery County. Our mission is to advance policy on a state and local level that looks after the interests of lower-income Marylanders in the hopes that their quality of life can be improved. We have worked previously to advance fair-minded education reform and to organize grassroots efforts to feed and clothe the impoverished in our community. Every fiber of STEP’s being has been put into efforts of this nature, and so it is only natural that we support HB 1027. The time has come for students seeking to better themselves as citizens and as workers in our great institutions of higher education to be treated to the respect and support that they deserve. There should not be a tradeoff between attaining a higher education and eating— both should be attainable for our college students.

Food insecurity affects 39% of students at two-year institutions and 29% of students at four-year institutions, and these numbers are far higher among students of color: one 2021 report found as many as 75% of Indigenous students and 70% of Black students experienced basic needs insecurity, including food insecurity. Moreover, the lack of stable, reliable access to food has been linked to decreased academic performance, poorer health, and higher rates of depression and anxiety.

Currently, SNAP guidelines state that students who are eligible for federal or state work study must work 20 hours per week in order to get food assistance. Beyond the basic hardship of juggling work and school, this can be onerous for students who lack transportation or are in an area where few jobs are available.

Under the federal COVID-19 state of emergency, these restrictions were loosened to allow all students who are eligible for work study, regardless of whether or not they are working, to receive SNAP benefits. HB 1027 will make this provision permanent, improving academic and health outcomes for students and ensuring those currently covered will not lose their benefits. In light of these facts, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 1027.

Thank you,

Students to End Poverty (STEP)

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