

March 7, 2022

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB1027 – Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility (SNAP for Students)

Position: Favorable

RE: Testimony in support of HB1027 – Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility (SNAP for Students)

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and the members of the Appropriations Committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Aiden Wechsler, and I am a sophomore government and politics major at the University of Maryland in College Park. I wanted to offer my support for HB1027 because of the immense challenges that college students throughout the state and the country face while attending college. Right now, thousands of American college students are facing food insecurity in which they will go hungry because they do not have the money to buy more food and choose instead to go hungry. According to the Department of Agriculture, the number of college students who are food insecure can range anywhere from 20% to 50%, significantly above the national average of 12%. Food insecurity is prevalent among low-income students who already have trouble affording tuition at colleges and universities, in addition to all the extra expenses students are expected to pay. According to Johns Hopkins, food-insecure students struggle academically as hunger can lead to lower grades and has been linked to depression, worse sleep, and poorer mental health, which prevents them from succeeding. The Covid-19 pandemic has only worsened this problem as students have been laid off from their jobs, and the price of food across the country has rapidly increased.

By expanding SNAP benefits to college students below the income threshold, we will be helping them succeed now and later in life. Expanding SNAP will help lower-income students be more successful academically and increase the likelihood of receiving their degrees and succeeding later in life. Expanding SNAP will expand opportunities to thousands of students who struggle with the high costs of college by helping reduce some of their expenses. College is already stressful enough for students, and students should not have to worry about whether they will be able to afford a meal or otherwise go hungry. After the Covid-19 pandemic, Maryland must expand SNAP benefits to college students below the income threshold so that low-income students do not go hungry while trying to get an education.

The University of Maryland, Student Government Association supports HB1027. This bill will:

- Places necessary emphasis on the rising struggle of food insecurity among college students.

- Recognizes the role of necessary physical health for students.
- Opens eligibility for SNAP benefits for students of personal or family income of \$0.00

We request a favorable vote on HB1027.

Sincerely,

Aiden Wechsler
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