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March 8, 2022

HB1027 – SNAP for Students Act

Heather Griner, LCPC – Director, College and Community Outreach
Services

Community College of Baltimore County

My name is Heather Griner and I am providing this written testimony in support of HB 1027 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Act (SNAP for Students Act). I have worked at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) for 21 years in student services. For the past seven years, I have been the Director of College and Community Outreach Services, a student support program focusing on basic needs security (food, housing, transportation, etc.) for the students of CCBC.

CCBC is the largest provider of higher education, workforce development, technology training and lifelong learning in the Baltimore metropolitan area. Its mission is to provide an accessible, affordable, and high-quality education that prepares students for transfer and career success, strengthens the regional workforce and enriches the community.

Rooted in the community since 1957, CCBC has three main campuses -- Catonsville, Dundalk, and Essex, educates nearly 50,000 students each year offering more than 50 associate degrees and more than 100 certificate programs. Approximately 95 % of CCBC graduates remain in the Baltimore region, contributing to the local workforce. CCBC is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges (MSAC) and Schools, and by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). CCBC is formally recognized as a minority-serving institution (MSI) by the U.S. Department of Education.

Community colleges serve as a link to employment for many individuals in the area. The credit programs allow for direct employment or transfer opportunities to four-year institutions. In addition, the continuing education department allows for a faster track to employment through credential and certificate programs. These programs can be completed in a shorter time frame and are necessary to the



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economic welfare of the state of Maryland by reducing the unemployment rate. Food security for all students in all programs, credit and non-credit is critical and allows students to focus on their education, instead of also being required to work 20 hours a week.

The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice surveyed 195,000 students from all over the country during the fall 2020 semester and found that food insecurity affected 39% of two-year community college students and 29% of students at four-year institutions. Information concerning these reports can be accessed at www.hope4college.com. CCBC participated in this study and found at our own campus that 38% had experienced food insecurity within the past 30 days. This survey was taken during a time when people, unfamiliar with SNAP eligibility requirements, found themselves in a financial situation due to the COVID -19 pandemic impact on the economy and job security. Interestingly, 50% of the student who experienced food insecurity at CCBC did not know where to receive assistance. These reports can be accessed at www.hope4college.com.

In my experience, many students are unaware that they potentially qualify for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) based on data concerning household size and income. Since fall 2017, CCBC has been pro-actively reaching out to these students based on information self-reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and offering to assist them with applying for SNAP, and other federal/state benefit.

Recognizing food insecurity is an issue for not only the students of CCBC, but nationwide, CCBC in partnership with the Department of Social Services has participated in the SNAP Opportunity Grant since October 2017. This grant supports the outreach efforts of their employees to assist students and community members with applying for possible federal/state benefits, including SNAP benefits. For more than 4 years, a portion of the salaries of these hardworking individuals have been supplemented with this grant including direct and indirect programmatic costs.

Removal of the 20-hour work requirement for full-time students to receive SNAP due to the COVID-19 pandemic was crucial to the students of CCBC. These full-time students could then focus on their education and still



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receive assistance in affording food. There are specific programs that require a student to be enrolled as a full-time student and do not provide a part-time option. Two specific areas that come to mind are some of the School of Health Profession programs and participation in student athletic.

Students enrolled in credit-based health profession programs are required to attend school full-time because of the practicum / internship requirements. They are asked to fully commit two years to this schedule and significantly reduce work, and preferably, not be employed at all during the duration of their health professions program. For some students, this requirement achieved through a combination of supports, including family financial support, friends' assistance and/or student loans. Unfortunately, not all students have a supportive environment to contribute financially to a students' non-academic needs, such as food and/or housing. These are the students that prior to COVID-19 were required to work at least 20 hours per week while also enrolled in a health professions program just to receive SNAP benefits. This additional work requirement was not applied to more financially secure students enrolled in the same programs, placing an additional burden on these otherwise qualified students. I have included a written testimony from a student enrolled in the Occupational Therapy Program at CCBC, who has benefited from the removal of the work requirement during her academic career at CCBC.

Similarly, student athletes are required to be enrolled full-time during the semester of their competitive play. Understandably, this requirement allows for a level playing field for all student athletes, except for student athletes who received SNAP prior to COVID-19. These student athletes were required to work 20 hours per week, in addition to full-time course work, practices and scheduled games. This hectic schedule hindered student athletes from performing at the top of their game on and off the court.

I personally have conducted research for my dissertation for a doctorate in Instructional Leadership for Changing Populations on the obtainment of SNAP benefits and student performance in a community college. Students who obtained SNAP benefits or already had the benefits were compared to students who met all of the qualifications to



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obtain the benefit but chose not to apply. This research led to the finding that students who obtained SNAP benefits during their semester were more likely to obtain a higher grade point average (GPA) and were more likely to re-enroll in a subsequent semester than students who were otherwise qualified for the benefit but declined the assistance.

The permanent removal of the 20-hour work requirement for full-time students enrolled in higher education, will afford these students the same opportunity as other students who are more financially secure. I have included testimony relating to this point from a former student who was required to work 20-hours per week while obtaining her bachelor's degree from Morgan State University. She firmly believes that without this work requirement, her GPA would have been higher. By allowing these students to focus on their education and career goals yields long range benefits. Higher graduation rates will increase, a more robust and skilled workforce is established, and ultimately the future of Maryland is strengthened.

Respectfully submitted by:

Heather Griner, LCPC

Director, College and Community Outreach Services

Community College of Baltimore County

443-840-4761 [o]

410-241-7048 [c]

hgriner@ccbcmd.edu



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March 8, 2022
HB 1027 – SNAP for Students Act
Anna Lopez
Occupational Therapy Assistant Student – Community College of Baltimore
County

My name is Anna Lopez and this is my written testimony in support of HB 1027 – SNAP for Students Act. I am in the Occupational Therapy program at CCBC. It is a two-year full-time credited program that I have been enrolled in since 2019. I look forward to completing this program this year and am expected to attend the pinning ceremony in May 2022.

In the beginning of 2022 I was awarded SNAP benefits. I qualified because I am a single mother raising an infant and am currently unemployed. Since receiving SNAP benefits, I am able to purchase nutritious foods for my daughter like fresh fruit, cheese, cereals and other nutritious foods that she needs to grow healthy and strong. I have tried applying to jobs to lessen my financial burden of paying for school and caring for my daughter but decided I needed to keep my priorities of raising my daughter and finishing my education first.

SNAP benefits have helped lessen the burden of trying to find money to pay for food. I do not think I would have been able to attend school full time, complete my classwork and care for my daughter this semester without SNAP assistance. I am grateful that the requirement of working 20 hours per week to maintain SNAP benefits has been lifted. I hope it continues to remain lifted so that full time students such as myself can continue pursuing their dreams while caring for their families.

Thank you,

Anna Lopez
Anticipated Occupational Therapy Assistant Graduate, May 2022
Community College of Baltimore County



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March 8, 2022

HB1027 – SNAP for Students Act

Jaleesa Thomas, M.S., Success Navigator

Community College of Baltimore County

My name is Jaleesa Thomas and this is written testimony in support of HB1027 – SNAP for Students Act. I started as a full-time student at Prince George’s Community College in Prince George’s County Maryland in 2006. By 2008, I transferred to Morgan State University as a full-time student. There I earned my Bachelor of Arts in Sociology in 2011. During my time at Morgan State University I worked part-time 20 hours a week and sometimes more at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center. My course load was reduced due to me working. But, I still remained a full-time student taking 12 credits or more if possible, so I was able to receive SNAP benefits, which was extremely helpful

I did not have a meal plan in the residence hall I was living in due to the extra expense to my college tuition. Although, having SNAP benefits helped me financially, working part-time took a toll on my academics. My grades were not always what I wanted them to be. It also limited me from taking more courses and extended the amount of time it took me to graduate from Morgan State University.

Balancing both full-time school and work became overwhelming and caused me to miss out on social events on campus and within the community.



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Sometimes I just wanted to be a student and thoroughly enjoy being a student by being present and interactive on campus with various clubs and or events. I also feel my grade point average suffered because of the additional burden of work and a full-time course load. I am grateful for the resource during my educational experience and fully support the permanent removal of the 20-hour per week work requirement for full-time students who receive SNAP benefits. Through much perseverance, I eventually graduated from Morgan State University and later finished a master's degree in Human Services Administration in 2020. I am currently employed as a success navigator at the Community College of Baltimore County, assisting students with basic needs security.

Thank you,

Jaleesa Thomas, M.S.

Success Navigator

Community College of Baltimore County

443-452-8082

Jthomas6@ccbycmd.edu