

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB452 - Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility (SNAP for Students)

Position: Favorable

17 February 2023

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and the members of the Appropriations Committee,

The University of Maryland, Student Government Association supports HB452 in requiring the Department of Human Services to provide food supplement benefits to students in higher education.

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Yonathan Gonzalez Villatoro and I am the Off-Campus Outlying Representative for the University of Maryland Student Government Association. I respectfully request a favorable report on HB452. As Off-Campus Outlying Representative, I represent the voices of over 12,000 commuter students at the University of Maryland. During my undergraduate studies, I have taken an interest in studying food insecurity. Last year, I led a team comprised of my fellow classmates in the College Park Scholars program and we wrote a request for proposal to award a Rockville-based nonprofit a \$1,000 grant to help them continue executing their mission ensuring that no food in Montgomery County Public Schools goes to waste and instead is distributed to students facing food insecurity.

I was alarmed to find a 2018 study from the University of Maryland School of Public Health that revealed that 20% of the entire student body is food insecure. The University is our state's flagship institution, and the fact that 1 in 5 Terps face food insecurity is a disgrace. It necessitates urgent policy action. Food insecurity has a snowballing effect on students' abilities to demonstrate their peak academic aptitude. Not having enough to eat will lead to you being much more likely to fall asleep during class, miss class altogether, fail an exam, have a lower GPA, and ultimately withdraw from the University.

Every student deserves the support they need to showcase their full potential at our institutions of higher learning. No student should be placed at an academic disadvantage because they cannot afford their daily bread. I respectfully request a favorable report on HB452.

Thank you,



Yonathan Gonzalez Villatoro (he/him/his)
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