

**Date:** February 21, 2023

**Bill number:** HB0452

**Committee:** House Appropriations Committee

**Bill title:** Food Supplement Benefits- Students- Eligibility (SNAP for Students)

**DHS Position:** **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

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The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide a letter of information for House Bill 452 (HB 452).

House Bill 452 would require the Department of Human Services to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to students enrolled in an institution of higher education who are residents of the State of Maryland, enrolled for at least 15 credit hours per year, and who meet a certain eligible income threshold. House Bill 452 would also require for fiscal year 2026 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation sufficient to reimburse the Department for expenditures made under the provisions of the Act.

DHS appreciates the intentions of addressing food insecurity for college students. One research study found food insecurity rates between 32%-37% for college freshmen which also increased the odds of developing depression.<sup>1</sup> Other research suggests that Universities that measure food insecurity among their study body are better positioned to advocate for change in student financial assistance.<sup>2</sup> It is the position of DHS that the Marylanders we serve are full of beauty and deserving of the dignity afforded through ensuring food security and would like the opportunity to collaborate with the Committee to advance this vision.

Federal eligibility requirements for SNAP benefits under 7 CFR § 273.5 states that individuals enrolled in institutions of higher education shall be ineligible to participate in SNAP unless an exemption is present or specific work requirements are met. House Bill 452 would require state funds to cover 100% of student SNAP benefits that do not meet the federal requirements. DHS would like to ensure the Committee understands that utilizing state funds to cover students ineligible for SNAP benefits under federal requirements could potentially become an extremely large financial commitment. There are currently over 50 institutions of higher learning within the state of Maryland. There are less than 5,000 eligible students enrolled in SNAP benefits. This bill will potentially provide 70-90% of the students enrolled in the over 50 institutions of higher learning access to SNAP benefits with no federal supplement.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide the aforementioned information to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. DHS welcomes continued collaboration with the Committee on House Bill 452.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruening, Meg., Brennhofner, Stephanie., Woerden, Irene Van., Todd, Michael., Laska, Melissa., (2016) Factors Related to the High Rates of Food Insecurity among Diverse, Urban College Freshmen. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* Volume 116, Issue 9, 1450-1457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2016.04.004>.

<sup>2</sup> Payne-Sturges, D. C., Tjaden, A., Caldeira, K. M., Vincent, K. B., & Arria, A. M. (2018). Student Hunger on Campus: Food Insecurity Among College Students and Implications for Academic Institutions. *American journal of health promotion : AJHP*, 32(2), 349-354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890117117719620>

