



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 452
Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility (SNAP for Students)
February 21, 2023
Favorable

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on House Bill 452. The bill requires the Maryland Department of Human Services to provide food supplement benefits to eligible students enrolled in an institution of higher education.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's largest domestic food and nutrition assistance program for low-income Americans. SNAP offers funds preloaded on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that eligible low-income individuals and families can use to purchase certain foods, including fruits and vegetables, dairy products, bread and cereals, meat, poultry, fish, and other pantry and convenience items, from authorized retailers.

Higher rates of food insecurity for college students have been attributed to the growing population of low-income students, insufficient financial aid, and the fact that many college students are not eligible for SNAP. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, students had to meet a strict set of criteria to receive SNAP benefits. Only students ages 18 to 49 who worked more than twenty hours per week, studied less than half-time, or had childcare responsibilities could apply. These stringent eligibility requirements left out many other students who were also struggling with food insecurity.

During the pandemic, as many students lost work-study jobs they had relied on to support and feed themselves, Congress temporarily expanded SNAP eligibility for college students by passing the Consolidated Appropriations Act in December 2020, which required states to add two temporary exemptions to the eligibility list until the COVID-19 federal public health emergency is lifted. **The Biden Administration announced that it will end COVID-19 emergency declarations on May 11th.** Students who are eligible for state or federally funded work-study programs now qualify for SNAP even if they do not participate. The amended requirements also allow college attendees whose families are expected to make no financial contribution to their education in the current academic year to begin to collect SNAP benefits.

For students in Maryland, House Bill 452 would model this temporary alteration to federal policy and build a permanent state policy change allowing students to apply to SNAP.

Food insecurity – the lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable, safe, nutritious food – is a serious problem for many Americans, including young adults across the USM. Growing evidence suggests the potential negative impact on educational success and efforts to mitigate food insecurity among students must remain a top priority.

The USM respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 452.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

USM Office of Government Relations - Patrick Hogan: phogan@usmd.edu