



February 21, 2023

**2023 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY**  
**HB0452: SNAP for Students**

**BILL:** HB0452: Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility (SNAP for Students)

**COMMITTEE:** Appropriations

**POSITION:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 0452

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Requiring the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide food supplement benefits to students enrolled in an institution of higher education who are residents of the State, enrolled for at least fifteen (15) credit hours per year and that have an expected FAFSA family contribution of \$0 or are eligible for state or federally funded work study program; and requiring, for fiscal year 2026 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation sufficient to reimburse DHS for expenditures made under this Act.

Dear Chair Barnes and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to **SUPPORT** the SNAP for Students bill, which will expand nutrition assistance programs for eligible students enrolled in higher education institutions.

HB0452 would continue Covid-19 pandemic waivers that eased restrictions on student access to SNAP. Prior to these waivers, full-time college students could not participate in SNAP unless they met certain exemption criteria. The Covid-19 waivers expanded those exemptions to include students who were eligible to participate in federal or state work-study programs or whose Expected Family Contribution was \$0.

This legislation is an important step in ensuring that students of higher education institutions continue to receive necessary nutrition assistance. The 2021 #RealCollege Survey, the nation's largest, most well-established assessment of students' basic needs, found that 38% of respondents from community colleges experienced food insecurity in the month prior to the survey. At four-year colleges, 29% of students reported food insecurity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, [#REALCOLLEGE 2021: BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY DURING THE ONGOING PANDEMIC](https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/real-college-2021.pdf), (Mar. 31, 2021) <https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/real-college-2021.pdf>

College students are an extremely diverse group. They are parents, veterans, and can be of any age. This is especially true at our local community colleges, where many students begin their studies, return to their studies, or are working to improve their skills and education to increase their opportunities in the workplace.

Locally in Montgomery County, we are proud of the initiatives our higher education institutions have pursued to alleviate food insecurity on campus. For example, Universities of Shady Grove (USG) has implemented *Grover Essentials*, an on-site resource to increase food access and promote wellness for students and the greater campus community. Montgomery College, through its Fuel for Success Food Campaign, operates on-site pantries and a mobile market to provide fresh produce to students and staff. Although food assistance is a noble and important way to support students in need, more equitable and widespread nutrition benefits like SNAP provide students a dignified way to acquire food that meets their specific dietary needs and preferences while also providing economic benefit to local food retail outlets across the state.

In our capacity as an official SNAP community based outreach organization, the Montgomery County Food Council has partnered with local colleges to provide students with SNAP application assistance. We have assisted families with single parents or college-aged children, who are pursuing a degree as a way to achieve financial independence. We have been able to help these full-time students secure SNAP benefits for themselves and their families specifically because of the exemptions in place that HB0452 would continue. **For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food Council supports HB0452 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.**

*The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources*

**For more information, please contact Massa Cressall, Interim Executive Director, at the email and phone number below.**



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