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Written Support

House Appropriations Committee

House Bill 452 (Solomon) Food Supplement Benefits – Students – Eligibility (SNAP for Students)

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On behalf of the member institutions of the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and the 56,000 students we serve, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 56,000 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of ***House Bill 452 (Solomon) Food Supplement Benefits – Students – Eligibility (SNAP for Students)***. This bill extends food supplement benefits to students enrolled in an institution of higher education for at least 15 credit hours per year who meet the eligible income threshold. Hunger is a growing problem on college and university campuses; some figures estimate that up to half of college students will face food insecurities at some point while pursuing their degree. Under HB 452, the Governor would be required to include an annual budget appropriation to sufficiently reimburse the Department of Human Services for expenditures made under this bill.

Since inflation, the cost of shopping at the grocery store has increased and is steadily growing while the shopper's income remains the same. College students are not exempt from this experience and have limited funds to supplement the rising costs of grocery shopping. Many MICUA institutions engage in activities to address student food insecurities on campus. Some examples include:

- **Stevenson University** has a campus food pantry run by student coordinators and volunteers. It holds regular hours and is in a central location on campus proximate to other student services. The pantry holds food drives, disseminates public service announcements, and has a Facebook page.
- **Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA)** recently established a campus food pantry to serve its students, recognizing the importance of addressing food insecurities to promote both individual wellbeing and educational attainment. MICA also held a food drive in November as part of its annual campus-wide Unity Fest activities.



AFFILIATES



- Three food pantries, containing both meal and snack items, are maintained on **Notre Dame of Maryland University's** (NDMU) campus. NDMU regularly stocks the food to ensure the students can find food to eat. The Student Life and Academic Support Departments offer information on local resources and food pantries in the community as well as assist with eligibility for SNAP benefits.
- **Loyola University Maryland** created a food pantry with non-perishable food, cleaning supplies, and feminine hygiene products that students can access throughout the academic year and off-peak dining hours. Loyola recently established the Student Success Fund to further provide for a student's unexpected need such as additional financial support for meals when a student's meal points run out or replenishing or restocking the food in an ailing parent's home.
- **Washington Adventist University** officially opened and dedicated a food pantry in April 2021. Funded in part with a grant from the Educational Credit Management Corporation, and also from the support of the Columbian Union Conference and Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington, as well as faculty, staff, alumni, friends of the University, and other individuals who made donations to build the stock of food and other necessities to be available to students.
- In 2021, **Mount St. Mary's University** conducted an extensive food insecurity study which led them to the establishment of "The Mount Table". This is an on-campus food pantry run by students, staff, and faculty out of the Office of Social Justice. The Mount partners with the Maryland Food Bank to provide an extra resource to the students. They have found this to be a grassroots approach to address a growing problem at the institution.

We thank the sponsor for introducing this important piece of legislation. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Irnande Altema, Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs, ialtema@micua.org.

For these reasons, MICUA urges a favorable Committee report for House Bill 452.