

February 17, 2023

2023 Session Support Testimony
HB0452 Food Supplement Benefits – Students – Eligibility (SNAP for students)

COMMITTEE: Appropriations
POSITION: Testimony of Support for House Bill 0452
BILL ANALYSIS: Extending SNAP eligibility to higher education students
SIGNED: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FRSC)

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record **in SUPPORT of H.B. 0452**. This letter is submitted on behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC) on behalf of the Council and does not necessarily represent the views of the State of Maryland. The FSRC was established by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise, to work towards a common goal of a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19. One of the key mandates of this council was to develop equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the Maryland food system.

The FSRC believes this legislation will advance several of our priority goals, including:

- **Addressing the food insecurity crisis in the State resulting from the COVID–19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis**
- **Expand and modernize the use of food benefits**

This legislation calls for SNAP benefit eligibility to be extended to students enrolled in higher education and who meet a certain eligibility income threshold. This bill works towards directly supporting the food security of university students by increasing food access resources. In order to qualify for SNAP benefits students must demonstrate that (1) their expected family contribution is \$0 on the most recent free application for federal student aid, and (2) the student is eligible to participate in the state or federally financed work study program.

In 2018, the University of Maryland found that 20% of the surveyed students reported that they were food insecure. Food insecure students were found to more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., first-generation college students, racial/gender minorities, and financially vulnerable students), and this food insecurity negatively impacted their academic performance, retention, and well-being. The guidelines for extending SNAP benefits to higher education students laid out in H.B. 0452 supports the recommendation in the FSRC report, which strives to increase the food security and sustainability of our local Maryland communities. By passing H.B. 0452, university students who are residents of the state of Maryland would be eligible for SNAP and would directly benefit from the increased food access that SNAP would provide. Further, this will reduce food insecurity for Maryland higher educational students, create more sustainable food access resources, and promote well-being and a more wholesome diet.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Wilson
Chair, Communications and Coordination Committee of the Food System Resilience Council