



**Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony in Support of HB452
Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility (SNAP for Students)
February 21, 2023**

TO: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair; The Honorable Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair; and Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, supports HB452. This bill would ensure that eligible college students receive SNAP benefits, helping to reduce food insecurity. Income eligibility will be based on a student having an expected family contribution of \$0 on their FAFSA, or their eligibility for a state or federally funded work study program.

This bill addresses food insecurity, *a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life*¹, for an often-overlooked portion of the population. Nationally, 38% of students at two-year colleges experienced food insecurity in fall 2020, along with 29% of students at four-year colleges.² Many college students do not have family or other supports they can rely on for financial assistance and they are already struggling to afford the extremely high cost of college tuition.

Here in Montgomery County, lower-income County residents face so many challenges struggling to afford basic necessities because the cost of living is so high. The Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard for a single adult is \$47,294.³ This is over three times the Federal Poverty Level and over \$14,000 more than the County's minimum wage. Furthermore, the Self-Sufficiency Standard indicates that this single adult can expect to spend an average of \$413 on food alone each month, in addition to \$1,699 for housing and \$189 on transportation. SNAP benefits can help residents cover these enormous costs.

College students without a financial support system face significant challenges making ends meet. HB452 can help students address one challenge they face, allowing them to remain focused on their studies and earning their college degree without worrying as much about how they will pay for their next meal. We ask the Committee for a favorable report.

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

² <https://www.usnews.com/education/articles/how-colleges-are-addressing-food-insecurity>

³ <https://maryland-cap.org/the-maryland-2023-self-sufficiency-standard-calculator/>