



Testimony to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 353: Higher Education-Hunger Free Grant Program-Alterations
Position: Favorable

February 23, 2022

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Cc: Members, Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

We are here today in strong support of SB 353.

SB 353 establishes funding for the Hunger Free Campus program.

SB 353 builds on the important work that took place in the 2021 session to address the critical, yet often overlooked issue of food insecurity on college campuses. According to a 2019 University of Maryland study, 20% of UMD students surveyed experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months.

An October 2022 [Washington Post](#) article found that nationally as many as 41% of college students report limited or uncertain access to food in the past 30 days. The article also noted that food insecurity does have a disparate impact with Black, first-generation, and two-year college students hardest, widening existing inequalities.

Food insecurity harms students. Hungry students tend to have lower GPAs, higher dropout rates, and are less engaged in campus activities because of low energy levels. Failure to ensure college students have the nutrition needed to pursue their studies is an institutional failure, not a reflection of low-income students.

SB 353 provides funding for campuses to become Hunger Free campuses and also requires reporting to gauge the success of the program, gather data on use,

2209 Maryland Ave · Baltimore, MD · 21218 · 410-220-0494

info@econaction.org · www.econaction.org · Tax

ID 52-2266235

and evaluate best practices from Hunger Free campuses that are fungible.

The bill provides oversight from the Maryland Higher Education Commission to ensure the funds are properly allocated and to administer this program. When passed SB 353 will provide critically needed assistance to our college students and reduce food insecurity on campuses across the state.

Any costs to enact this program are far outweighed by the benefits that accrue to individual students who can pursue their studies, to Maryland colleges who will see higher GPAs and graduation rates, and for working families who won't be saddled with the costs of paying off student loans without having gained the benefit of the degree.

For all of these reasons, we support SB 353 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

2209 Maryland Ave · Baltimore, MD · 21218 · 410-220-0494

info@econaction.org · www.econaction.org · Tax

ID 52-2266235

Economic Action Maryland is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.