

Committees: Education, Energy and the Environment

Testimony on: SB353 Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

Position: Favorable

20 February 2023

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and the members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

The University of Maryland – College Park, Student Government Association supports SB353 that beginning in fiscal year 2025 allocates \$1,500,000 to the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, increasing the capacity of institutions and centers to implement the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony for this legislation. My name is Caroline Howser, and I am a junior at the University of Maryland, College Park. In my three years of college, I have never had a dining plan. For my freshman and sophomore year, I lived in an on-campus apartment, so I was not required to have one, and since I pay for my room, board, and tuition myself, I decided not to get a dining plan so I could save money. But what I soon realized was that despite working as much as I could, I was not able to afford groceries, because I also had to set aside money for next year's tuition, send money to my family to help them pay their bills, and cover my own expenses.

I returned home towards the end of the fall semester in 2021 and my mom sat me down to express concern for how thin I had become. To which I could only respond, "I can't afford to eat." After this conversation I decided to apply for SNAP benefits. I hoped I would qualify since I was working my way through college and didn't have a dining plan, but that was not the case. College students have to be working more than 20 hours a week to qualify, and for the most part I was, but there were several weeks where I had exams, or was exposed to COVID-19, or had a holiday break that kept me from being able to hit that 20 hour minimum. All of these instances were completely out of my control, yet kept me from being able to get the help I needed. I applied anyway because I figured it couldn't hurt, and was approved for a one-time amount of \$250. I then used \$250, plus items from my campus' food pantry, to get me through the entire spring semester. I sustained myself using just \$250 for 4 months.

Never having enough food throughout my entire college experience has led to negative impacts on me physically, mentally, and emotionally. My academics have undoubtedly been affected by inability to afford food. College students deserve better, we deserve to be able to eat. And it is for this reason I respectfully request a favorable vote on SB353.

Thank you,



Caroline Howser (she/her/hers)

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