



Mission: *To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy*

Vision: *Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

HB 407 Food Supplement Benefits – Students – Eligibility (SNAP for Students)

Hearing Date: 3/12/2024

Committee: Appropriations

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang and Members of the Appropriates Committee, the Maryland Public Health Association is pleased to support HB407 Food Supplement Benefits -Students – Eligibility (SNAP for Students). This bill would eliminate the 20-hr per week employment requirement for SNAP eligibility for college students who are enrolled for at least 15 credits per year.

A 2020 Hope Center Survey found that 1 in 3 college students experience food insecurity, and this is only getting worse with inflation.² Certain groups are at greater risk, including students of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, older students, students attending 2-year colleges, parents, students who experienced childhood food insecurity, former foster youth, lower-income students, students receiving financial aid, employed students, students experiencing housing instability or living off-campus, students who do not own or have access to a vehicle, students with poor health status, first-generation college students, and students who are financially independent. These rates are worse at HBC/Us.

College is becoming much more expensive. In 1975, a Pell Grant covered more than 75% of the cost of college. In 2020, the maximum Pell grant covered only 26% of the cost. At UMBC, for example, 25 percent of undergrads are Pell Grant eligible. If the employment requirement for SNAP were lifted, all Pell eligible students would likely qualify for SNAP.

Food insecurity impacts academic success. These students report higher rates of depression and anxiety, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and impaired cognitive function. Improving SNAP eligibility and outreach for college students should be irresistible for states: it improves the odds that students will academically thrive, graduate on time, and join the skilled workforce to meet employers' needs.

The Maryland Public Health Association urges the House Appropriations Committee to pass HB 407.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)

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References:

¹ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/HB0407>

² Hilliard T. & McKibben B. (2023) Strategies for States and Colleges to Reduce Food Insecurity among Students. The Hope Center, Temple University. <https://hope.temple.edu/policy-advocacy/closing-college-snap-gap>

³ The Hope Center Survey 2021: Basic needs insecurity during the ongoing pandemic. March 31, 2021.

<https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/HopeSurveyReport2021.pdf>

⁴ NAFSAA Issue Brief August 2022 Doubling the Maximum Pell Grant.

⁵ Weaver RR, et. al. (2020) University food insecurity and academic performance. Journal of American College Health. 68:7, 727-733

⁶ The Hope Center. States leading the way in SNAP eligibility and SNAP outreach to students. June 2022.

https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/States%20SNAP_The%20Hope%20Center.pdf