



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

Appropriations Committee

March 12, 2024

SUPPORT

Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 407. This bill provides food supplement benefits to students who are residents of the State, are enrolled in an institution of higher education for at least 15 credit hours per year, whose family contribution is expected to be \$0, and who are eligible to participate in a certain work study program.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Prosperity Now's most recent scorecard for Maryland shows that at least one fifth of Marylanders struggle to pay for basic expenses, 20.2% of Maryland households experience income volatility, and 26.7% had difficulty paying for usual household expenses,¹ including food. Programs like SNAP are essential for low-income students to provide consistent access to food. According to a recent study by the University of Maryland, 20% of UMD students reported that they were food insecure.² HB 407 will expand SNAP access for students for years to come by creating an annual appropriation specifically for college students.

We have seen that SNAP not only lifts low-income households out of poverty, but it also supports the local and national economy. According to a 2019 report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, every \$1 in SNAP benefits can contribute to the Gross National Product by up to \$1.50.³ This means that HB 407 would both further the economic well-being of individual Marylanders as well as the state GDP as a whole.

Enacting HB 407 would ensure that 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.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 407.

¹ Prosperity Now Scorecard: <https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/reports#report-state-profile/24>

² <https://studentaffairs.umd.edu/food-access-student-well-being-study>

³ USDA: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs/>