



March 8, 2024

**2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY  
HB0407: SNAP for Students**

**BILL:** HB0407: Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility  
**COMMITTEE:** Appropriations  
**POSITION:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 0407  
**BILL ANALYSIS:** Requiring the Department of Human Services to provide 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; and requiring, for fiscal year 2027 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation sufficient to reimburse the Department for certain expenditures.

Dear Chair Barnes and members of the Appropriations Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to **SUPPORT** the SNAP for Students bill, which will expand nutrition assistance programs for eligible students enrolled in higher education institutions.

During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, USDA granted waivers to states that eased restrictions on college students' access to SNAP Benefits. The waivers allowed full-time college students who were eligible for work study, or whose Expected Family Contribution was \$0, to enroll in SNAP. Those waivers have since lapsed, bringing back more restrictive barriers to SNAP enrollment for many full-time college students. HB0407 would restore access to critical nutrition assistance for college students by once again easing eligibility requirements.

As a designated community-based organization with the Maryland Department of Human Services's SNAP Outreach Program, the Montgomery County Food Council has partnered with local colleges to provide students with SNAP application assistance. We have assisted



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families with single parents or college-aged children, who are pursuing a degree as a way to achieve financial independence. In previous years, we have been able to help these full-time students secure SNAP benefits for themselves and their families specifically because of the exemptions in place that HBo407 would bring back.

College students are a diverse group of people; they are parents, veterans, and can be any age, and the evidence demonstrates an urgent need to support students facing food insecurity. The 2021 #RealCollege Survey, which is the nation's largest, most well-established assessment of students' basic needs, found that 38% of respondents from community colleges experienced food insecurity in the month before the survey. At four-year colleges, 29% of students reported food insecurity.<sup>1</sup>

We are proud of the initiatives that Montgomery County higher education institutions have taken to alleviate food insecurity on campus. Universities of Shady Grove (USG) has implemented *Grover Essentials*, a resource to increase food access and promote wellness for students and the greater campus community. Montgomery College's *Fuel for Success Food Campaign* operates pantries and mobile markets for students and staff. These food assistance programs are important for students in need. However, more equitable and widespread nutrition benefits such as SNAP provide students a dignified way to acquire food that meets their specific dietary needs and preferences, while also providing economic benefits to local food retail outlets across the state.

**For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food council supports HBo407 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.**

*The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources*

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<sup>1</sup> [#REALCOLLEGE 2021: Basic Needs Insecurity During The Ongoing Pandemic](#). Lumina Foundation

