

Retrievers Essentials - UMBC

Regarding Maryland House Bill HB0407

Favorable

On behalf of all Retrievers Essentials' staff, volunteers and patrons, we strongly urge you to pass HB0407 so that food insecure students have access to the resources they need.

Retrievers Essentials is the free food program at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County campus that provides resources including a free grocery store, free farmers market, and Save-a-Swipe program to thousands of food insecure students every year. Last year alone we served more than 1,000 students solely in our free grocery store, and distributed almost 37,560 pounds of food campus-wide. We see food insecurity every day and struggle to meet students' needs solely through volunteer efforts, especially since the majority of our volunteers are students. While we can provide students with a bag of food and toiletries, that doesn't stop them from being food insecure. We do not have the resources or power to do that, but you do.

Programs, such as SNAP, can provide that additional support students need to continue their education. Unfortunately, many of our students do not have the time or energy to be academically successful and also meet the employment requirement for SNAP. In fact, expecting full-time students to be employed 20-hours a week is completely unrealistic. It is equivalent to a 65 hour work week.

Students should not have to create volunteer programs like Retrievers Essentials; college students should not have to worry about when they will get their next meal; and federal programs, designed to alleviate hunger for low-income people should not exclude college students. Since SNAP expansion at the federal level is unlikely to happen, the state has an obligation to fill the gap. Our goal is to create a system that no longer needs us, but we need your help.

While it may seem like HB0407 only allows students to eat, it has longer lasting effects for everyone. If students are fed, they will continue their education (food insecure students are at least 40% less likely to graduate)¹, get jobs and contribute to the economy and society. It is also important to note that every dollar spent on SNAP increases GDP between \$0.80 to \$1.50.² Providing more SNAP benefits not only helps food insecure people, it also boosts our economy.

Please pass HB407. It's good for students, and it's good for Maryland.

¹ Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Press Release. Food Insecurity During College Years Linked to Lower Graduation Rate. Sept 1, 2021

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2021/food-insecurity-during-college-years-linked-to-lower-graduation-rate>

² Canning, P. & Morrison, RM. Quantifying the Impact of SNAP Benefits on the U.S. Economy and Jobs. USDA July 18, 2019
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs/>