



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

**TESTIMONY IN FAVOR WITH AMENDMENT OF
HOUSE BILL 1090
Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility
By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdpHA)
February 18, 2025**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 1090, which would require the Maryland Higher Education Commission to add a question to the college aid application about missed meals due to financial reasons, without mandating a response.

A 2020 Hope Center Survey found that 1 in 3 college students experience food insecurity, and this is only getting worse with inflation.¹ Certain groups are at greater risk for food insecurity, including students of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, older students, students attending 2-year colleges, students who are 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.¹

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.² Around 30% of Maryland undergraduate college students receive a Pell grant.³

Food insecurity impacts academic success. Students experiencing food insecurity report higher rates of depression and anxiety, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and impaired cognitive function.⁴ 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.⁵

HB1090 would allow students to self-identify as food insecure on the Maryland College Aid Processing System application. Having this information will help the Maryland Higher Education Commission have a better understanding of the prevalence of food insecurity among Maryland college students. Furthermore, it will create an opportunity for colleges to use this information to do targeted outreach to inform students about support services and basic needs assistance available on campuses.

The Maryland Public Health Association urges the House Appropriations Committee to pass HB 1090.

¹ 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>

² NAFSAA Issue Brief August 2022 Doubling the Maximum Pell Grant.

³ National Center for Educational Statistics

⁴ Weaver RR, et. al. (2020) University food insecurity and academic performance. *Journal of American College Health*. 68:7, 727-733

⁵ 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

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.

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