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DEPUTY SPEAKER PRO TEM

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Oversight Committee
on Personnel

Capital Budget

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 1090 – SNAP for Students Act
House Appropriations Committee – February 18, 2025

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, Esteemed Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on HB 1090, which in a no to low-cost way, will assist in identifying and better supporting college students facing food insecurity.

The amended bill simply adds one question on the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) application asking whether, in the last 6 months, the applicant has missed a meal because of an inability to afford food. Answering this question is optional, but if students do choose to answer, the information provided will give colleges and universities the ability to reach out to those students directly with food resources, information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment, and other possible wrap-around supports. This new question on the MDCAPS application will help schools better streamline and target their student support. The change is supported by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), which administers MDCAPS as well as the higher education community.

The bill as drafted currently includes a section to expand SNAP eligibility for those students participating in work study on campus, building on existing federal regulations in [7 CFR 273.5](#) (Section 1 of HB 1090). We have been working collaboratively with the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) and they have agreed to update the *Maryland Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Manual, Maryland Integrated Practice Model for Serving Children, Vulnerable Adults, and Families* to clarify eligibility for those meeting the work requirement or participating in Federal Work Study. Federal regulations already permit these students to participate, but additional state administrative action is needed to ensure all eligible Maryland students and institutions of higher education understand eligibility and their ability to participate.

We're glad to share that because of the internal policy change and partnership with DHS, Section 1 is no longer needed and will now be taken out of the bill in a proposed Sponsor Amendment. Additionally, my Amendment will move Section 2 to the Human Services Article 5-503.1 over to the Education Article 11-1705 or 1706 where the

[Hunger Free Campus Grant Program](#) resides.

The updated manual will maximize existing federal flexibilities for SNAP benefits for students to include:

- 1) averaging the 20-hour work hours/week over a quarter, providing greater flexibility to access benefits over the course of the school year; and
- 2) clarifying that students are eligible for benefits if they anticipate receiving Federal Work Study and meet other technical eligibility requirements under SNAP.

Numerous studies indicate that students facing food insecurity have lower GPAs, poorer health, higher rates of depression, and anxiety. Food insecurity is a serious problem among college students.

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs issued a report preview in September 2024 that surveyed 74,350 students between January 2023 and July 2024. The results indicated that food insecurity affected 41% of students at two-year and four-year institutions.ⁱ Moreover, students of color were more likely to experience basic needs insecurity, including food insecurity. Across two- and four-year institutions, 74% of Indigenous and 72% of Black students experienced basic needs insecurity. Additionally, 66% of LGBTQ students experienced some form of basic needs insecurity. Nontraditional students are also affected, with 74% of students who are also parents experiencing basic needs insecurity.ⁱⁱ

A recent study by Professor Julia Wolfson, at the Bloomberg School for Public Health at Johns Hopkins found food insecurity during college can be a substantial barrier to graduation and attainment of bachelor's and graduate/professional degrees. Students experiencing food insecurity, particularly those who are first-generation students, are less likely to graduate from college, and if they do graduate, they are more likely to receive an associate's degree rather than a bachelor's or graduate/professional degree.ⁱⁱⁱ Food insecurity jeopardizes future economic success and upward social mobility by creating unnecessary barriers to college completion.

Another study assessed the prevalence of food insecurity the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), Maryland's flagship university and one of the nation's preeminent public research universities.^{iv} Among UMCP students:

- About 20% of UMCP students surveyed were food insecure at some point in the 12 months preceding the survey
- Food insecure students reported poorer general health, and experienced higher levels of depression, anxiety, distress, anger, and loneliness than their peers.
- On average, compared to their counterparts, food insecure students had lower GPAs and were more likely to withdraw from the University before completing their degrees

Food insecurity disproportionately affected certain college students, including first-generation college students, racial/ethnic minority students, transfer students, students with a disability, as well as students who worked longer hours and/or were financially independent.

Addressing food insecurity on campuses benefits not only the students, but colleges and universities as well:

- Students whose basic needs are met, have higher academic performance and are more likely to complete their degree generating more tuition dollars for institutions.
- Students who can focus on learning enhance the academic environment for faculty and staff.
- Partnerships between institutions and community organizations for the benefit of students can result in new resources, relationships, and opportunities for institutions.

Again, this bill is a small but important step forward in combatting food insecurity on college campuses. It will help give students the opportunity to focus their time and energy on school, successfully securing their economic futures. I urge the Committee to provide a favorable report on HB 1090 - SNAP for Students Act.

ⁱ The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs. (2024). Preview: 2023-24 student basic needs survey report. Temple University. <https://hope.temple.edu/research/hope-center-basic-needs-survey/preview-2023-24-student-basic-needs-survey>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Wang, Y.-W., Cruz, T. E., & Bush, L. (2019). UMD food access & student well-being study. College Park, MD: University of Maryland Counseling Center Research Unit.