



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 18, 2025

HB1090

Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1090**. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 1090 would require the Department of Human Services to provide food supplement benefits to eligible students enrolled in higher education who meet specific work-study criteria. It also mandates the Maryland Higher Education Commission to include a question in the Maryland College Aid Processing System application about whether the applicant has missed a meal due to financial hardship. However, students are not obligated to answer this question. The goal is to address food insecurity among college students and ensure they have access to adequate nutrition while pursuing their education

The Catholic Church upholds the dignity of every person and emphasizes the importance of meeting basic human needs, such as access to food. This legislation embodies the principle of solidarity by recognizing and addressing the struggles faced by students who are often overlooked in discussions about poverty and hunger. The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable calls for prioritizing policies that assist those in need, particularly young adults striving to improve their lives through education. Providing food supplement benefits reflects the moral obligation to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have the resources necessary to thrive. Supporting this bill aligns with the Church's commitment to building a society rooted in justice, compassion, and care for all members, particularly those who face hunger and hardship.

House Bill 1090 directly tackles food insecurity, a growing issue among college students that affects their ability to succeed academically and personally. By providing food assistance, the bill ensures that students can focus on their studies without the added burden of worrying about where their next meal will come from. This not only supports individual well-being but also strengthens Maryland's workforce by helping students complete their education and enter the job market as productive and healthy citizens. Furthermore, collecting data on food insecurity through the optional question will provide insights into the scope of the problem, enabling the state to develop more targeted and effective solutions.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 1090**.