

**House Appropriations Committee**

February 25, 2025

**HB 774 - Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations**

**Position: Favorable**

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The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **HB 774** with amendments. This bill makes critical updates to the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, expanding its impact and ensuring that more students have access to essential food security resources while pursuing higher education.

Maryland's community colleges serve a diverse student population, many balancing coursework, jobs, and family responsibilities while facing financial challenges. Hunger remains a significant barrier to student success, and the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program provides essential funding to support food pantries, meal-sharing programs, and outreach efforts. Expanding and strengthening this program ensures that more students have access to basic needs support, improving academic persistence, completion rates, and overall well-being.

While MACC is strongly supportive of the intent of HB 774, we believe that amendments should be made to ensure that the program remains accessible and equitable for all institutions, particularly community colleges. These amendments include: (1) Adjusting the \$25,000 matching contribution requirement, which may pose a barrier for smaller institutions with fewer resources. (2) Clarifying that community colleges may use grant funds for indirect costs, such as outreach, administrative support, and program management, to help institutions better implement and sustain hunger-relief initiatives. (3) Ensuring equitable distribution of funds between two-year and four-year institutions so that community colleges are not disadvantaged in the allocation process.

Please note, MACC fully supports SB 789, which also aims to strengthen the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program and increase funding for hunger-relief initiatives in higher education. We appreciate both bill's commitment to expanding food security efforts and ensuring that no student has to choose between their education and their next meal. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** vote on **HB 774** with **AMENDMENTS**.

Please contact Brad Phillips ([bphillips@mdacc.org](mailto:bphillips@mdacc.org)) or Drew Jabin ([djabin@mdacc.org](mailto:djabin@mdacc.org)) with questions.