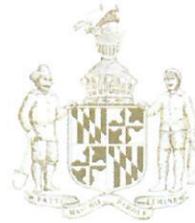


DEBRA M. DAVIS, ESQ.
Legislative District 28
Charles County

Environment and Transportation
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 204
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3337 · 301-858-3337
800-492-7122 Ext. 3337
Debra.Davis@house.state.md.us

The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 21, 2025

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Appropriations Committee members,

Good Afternoon, Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and esteemed members of the committee. I am Delegate Debra Davis, and I come before you today in strong support of HB774, the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, legislation that seeks to combat food insecurity and ensure that every student in our state has access to nutritious meals.

Since its implementation in 2021, the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program has significantly impacted Maryland's higher education institutions. For instance, Harford Community College was awarded a \$17,020 grant in October 2024, enabling the college to enhance its on-campus food pantry and provide essential resources to students in need. Similarly, St. Mary's College of Maryland received funding to upgrade its food pantry facilities, extend Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to both on-campus and off-campus dining options, and create a meal-sharing program for students.

These initiatives have led to increased student access to nutritious meals, improved focus in the classroom, and better academic performance. However, despite these successes, many students continue to face food insecurity.

Beginning in fiscal year 2027, HB774 would require the Governor to include in the annual budget bill a \$225,000 appropriation for the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. Additionally, public institutions of higher education and regional higher education centers—both two-year and four-year institutions—would be required to contribute at least \$25,000 in cash or in-kind contributions as part of the program's matching requirement. The Maryland Higher Education Commission would allocate between \$25,000 and \$150,000 to institutions and centers for vital food security initiatives, ensuring targeted and effective support for students in need.

By increasing funding and expanding eligibility, we can ensure that even more students will benefit from consistent, nutritious meals. This will not only reduce food insecurity but also support the physical and cognitive development of our students, setting them up for success in and out of the classroom. A greater investment in this program means fewer students starting the day hungry and more students reaching their full potential.

I urge my colleagues to support this crucial legislation. Addressing food insecurity is not just an act of compassion—it is an economic and moral imperative. Together, we can make a lasting impact and create a hunger-free future for all.

Thank you, and I respectfully request a favorable report on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Davis".

Delegate Debra Davis, Esq.
District 28, Charles County