



BILL: SB 789 - Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

HEARING DATE: February 21, 2025

POSITION: FAVORABLE

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The University of Maryland, Baltimore County Student Government Association(SGA) represents more than 10,000 undergraduate students. As such, we fully support Senate Bill 789. UMBC [recently received](#) the Hunger-Free Campus Grant to support the programming of Retriever Essentials, a 100% free resource for food and other essential needs for students. Given limited funding, the SGA has regularly allocated funding to Retriever Essentials. Additional financial support from the state is necessary to sustain and expand these vital services.

The urgency of this issue is underscored by research. A [2024 report](#) from the Government Accountability Office revealed that nearly 3.8 million college students may face food insecurity. This translates to detrimental effects on their mental and physical health due to food insecurity and unhealthy food choices. Beyond immediate health concerns, food insecurity also hinders success in college. Lack of nutritious foods can lead to decreased energy levels, lack of focus, and overall reduced ability to succeed in their studies ([Bruening et al., 2016](#)). SNAP benefits alleviate food insecurity and thus reduce the stress and anxiety associated with obtaining food. This will lead to improved student mental health.

Furthermore, food insecurity contributes to student withdrawal from college. Research finds that students who face food insecurity are often forced to prioritize basic needs, such as access to food, over their education, ultimately leading to a higher risk of dropping out. This challenge is particularly acute for first-generation students, who may lack the established support systems or resources to navigate these difficulties([Wolfson et al., 2022](#)). Addressing food insecurity on college campuses is crucial to improving student outcomes.

While we acknowledge the state’s budget challenges, ensuring students have access to basic necessities must remain a priority. Addressing food insecurity will pay dividends in the long run by improving graduation rates, retention, and overall success — contributing to a stronger workforce and economy.

The research underscores the need for Senate Bill 789. Investing in students' basic needs fosters a learning environment conducive to success.

For these reasons, the UMBC SGA respectfully requests a **favorable committee report**.



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