

**Written Testimony for the Hearing on Senate Bill 789:
Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program Alterations**

To: The Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Vathani Logendran

Subject: Support for Senate Bill 789 – Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 789, which proposes necessary alterations to the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. As a higher education institution that applied for the Hunger Free Campus grant in September 2024, we believe this bill will significantly impact our ability to serve our students, particularly those experiencing food insecurity.

Our university, like many others, operates a food pantry that plays a crucial role in supporting students who are struggling with access to nutritious meals. However, as with many campus-based food assistance programs, our pantry faces significant financial constraints that limit the breadth and reach of the support we can provide. More funding is essential for us to expand our offerings, increase access, and reach even more students who are in need.

The Hunger-Free Campus grant program represents an invaluable resource to help bridge this gap, and the potential increase in appropriations outlined in Senate Bill 789 would provide the necessary financial support for us to enhance and sustain our food pantry services. With this funding, we would be able to:

- **Expand the scope of food pantry offerings**, ensuring that students have access to a wider variety of nutritious, culturally relevant foods.
- **Increase access and reduce barriers** for students who may be facing transportation issues or stigma when utilizing the pantry.
- **Strengthen outreach efforts** to ensure that more students know about and can access the pantry services when they need them most.
- **Provide additional support** in the form of nutrition education and guidance, empowering students to make healthier food choices with the resources available to them.

Food insecurity is an ever-present issue on college campuses, and it is often exacerbated by the limited funding available to address it. With more money directed toward the Hunger-Free Campus grant program, we would be better equipped to serve our students

and ensure they can focus on their academic success without the constant worry of where their next meal will come from.

We strongly urge the committee to support the proposed changes in Senate Bill 789, which would provide greater flexibility and funding to hunger-relief efforts on campuses across the state. The impact of this bill cannot be overstated, and we believe it will directly benefit our students by helping to alleviate one of the most pressing challenges they face.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Vathani Logendran/Retriever Essentials Program Co-Leader

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