



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 789

Higher Education – Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 21, 2025

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Jewish Community Relations Council
of Greater Washington

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 789, which would increase the funding to the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program by \$100,000 and open the Hunger-Free Campus title designation to private institutions of higher education, with no change to their funding eligibility.

Food insecurity on college campuses is a growing public health concern for much of the country, with 1 in 4 students experiencing food insecurity while enrolled in school. Attending an institution of higher education and successfully completing a program or certification is one of the most effective ways to achieve upward economic mobility and contribute at higher rates to the local economy. A well-educated workforce is the foundation for building an economically prosperous state. Community college students in particular are far more likely to remain residents of the community where they've attended school and contribute to their local economy. Generally, Maryland should be taking further action to build and strengthen food security on college campuses, as food secure students are more likely to graduate.

Additional funding for the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program would allow for greater participation from interested campuses and allow for even greater impact for low-income and food insecure students. Additional investment in the campuses who are facing higher rates of resource/food insecurity, may increase the likelihood of degree completion and result in benefits to the community at large (public health, skilled workforce, tax revenue, etc.)

The current form of the Hunger Free Campus Grant Program legislation allows for targeted efforts in each campus community to support food insecure students and leverage sustainable solutions that address basic food needs, like information and access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

We commend Senator Washington for her work on SB 789 and continued efforts to support the growth of the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, recognizing the need for more funding and we hope to see additional movement for the legislation when the state's budget can adequately accommodate the level of interest and growing need.

MAP appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests that the committee a favorable report for SB 789.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.