



***Mission:*** To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

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**TESTIMONY IN FAVOR  
SENATE BILL 0789  
Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations  
By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdpHA)  
February 19, 2025**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 0789, which would increase the amount of annual grant funds in the Hunger-free Campus Grant program from \$150,000 to \$250,000 in fiscal year 2027.

A 2023 survey of students at the University of Maryland, College Park found that 27% of respondents were experiencing food insecurity. This percentage is growing as tuition, housing, and food prices rise. “Food-insecure students were far likelier than their food-secure counterparts to report depression or anxiety, struggling to meet deadlines or attend class, and avoiding social interactions because of an inability to afford a meal out. They also suffered career-related consequences, as many couldn’t pursue an unpaid internship or had to take jobs that didn’t further their professional goals simply to make ends meet.”<sup>1</sup>

Food-insecure students are more likely to be female, students of color, former foster youth, low-income, disabled, in poor health, first-generation college attenders, attending two-year colleges, transfer students, and students who are on their own financially.

Two- and four-year public colleges across Maryland are recognizing this growing disparity and have set up programs like on-campus food pantries, discounts at farmers’ markets, food recovery programs, and meal-sharing programs (Save-a-swipe). Some community colleges even have “navigators” to help students apply for benefits like SNAP. These programs are largely the result of students, faculty, and staff volunteering their time and money to ensure that all enrolled students have equitable access to an education.

The Hunger-free Campus Grant has allowed many two- and four-year colleges in Maryland to access desperately needed funds as demand for these services rise. For example, UMBC was recently awarded \$20,000 from the grant - all of which will be spent purchasing discounted food from the Maryland Food Bank to keep our pantry stocked. Unfortunately, there is only \$150,000 available per year for 29 colleges. Raising this to \$250,000 in fiscal year 2027 will not fully meet the needs of food-insecure students, but it is a step in the right direction.

<sup>1</sup> <https://today.umd.edu/survey-returns-to-measure-food-insecurity-among-umd-students>

The Maryland Public Health Association urges the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee to vote in favor of SB0789.

*The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*

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