

SB 789 - MAP - FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV



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.

SB0789_MarylandHungerSolutions_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Brielle Pinzini

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 789
Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program – Alterations

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 21, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, my name is Brielle Pinzini. I am the Anti-Hunger Program Assistant for Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger in Maryland by improving participation in the federal nutrition programs.

On behalf of Maryland Hunger Solutions, I offer our strong support of SB 789-Higher Education-Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program Alterations, 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.

For over ten years, Maryland Hunger Solutions has provided application assistance to any Marylander trying to apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We provide this service both in-person and over-the-phone, where our toll-free hotline receives 300-400 calls per month from Marylanders seeking assistance. In addition, Maryland Hunger Solutions leads a coalition of over 30 colleges and universities around the state of Maryland fighting food insecurity on campus, focused on strengthening access to SNAP and emergency food resources for students, staff, and surrounding community members.

The impact of this legislation would be an amplification of the current program and a step towards acknowledging food security on every campus as a public health concern. According to the most recent GAO report on college student food insecurity on a national scale, an estimated 1 in 4 students experience food insecurity while enrolled.¹ Hungry students have a harder time learning, and food insecurity has been tied to lower rates of matriculation. Providing support for building campus food security in Maryland is a long-term investment in future taxpayers, as college graduates tend to contribute more taxes over their lifetime.²

The Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program provides funding for public institutions of higher education, working towards strengthening food security in their community. At its current rate of funding, the program allotment does not match the significant interest from campus applicants

¹ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Estimated Eligibility and Receipt Among Food Insecure College Students, 2024 . <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-107074>

² APLU. (2024, July 31). How do college graduates benefit society at large? - APLU. <https://www.aplu.org/our-work/4-policy-and-advocacy/publicvalues/societal-benefits/#:~:text=Because%20college%20graduates%20typically%20earn,than%20a%20high%20school%20graduate.&text=All%20told%2C%20an%20average%20bachelor's,degree%20is%20a%20bachelor's%20degree.&text=Public%20universities%20also%20play%20a,who%20advance%20the%20national%20interest.&text=1..Just%20the%20Money%2C%E2%80%9D%202015.>



and growing need on campuses across Maryland. The current program provides \$150,000 in annually appropriated funds. Over the last three cycles—funding has been administered anywhere from 9 to 11 Maryland campuses. This amount is roughly one-third of eligible Maryland public campuses, having been successfully awarded funds.

The first year that the grant program went live, requests totaled nearly \$450,000, but available program funding only allotted for a third of that amount. Over the last three cycles, the average campus award has hovered around a range of \$10,000-20,000. Most campuses apply for the grant with in-kind contributions, and we have seen at least one smaller, rural campus in Carroll County refuse the entirety of funds awarded because they could not meet the program’s matching requirement with their campus resources. Each year, the total of campus requests for the grant has surpassed the amount of appropriated funding.

Additional funding for the Hunger- Free Campus Grant Program would allow for greater participation from interested campuses and allow for even greater impact with assisting students where other support programs may prove difficult.

As a SNAP Outreach provider and leading member of the Maryland Hunger-Free Campus Coalitions, we have had the unique perspective of observing the growth of the program, while also supporting campus efforts. Campus awardees have been able to build the infrastructure that has a resounding effect on the community that surrounds them. They have been able to hire additional part-time staff members, open additional pantry locations or extend their hours, implement projects that further build their campus food security and better support the unique needs of their community. Every college campus is different, and no student is the same.

College students often have frustrating experiences applying for SNAP, because the program policy has difficulty acknowledging multifaceted identity. A “college student” is not only referring to person aged, 18-24, but can include older adults, single parents, persons who are unhoused, first-generation college students, immigrants/members of mixed status households, and those who are disabled. Food security programs on college and university campuses become vital in those moments with programs often led by volunteers, students, and unpaid staff members. The Hunger Free Campus Grant Program allows for more sustainable solutions to a growing problem.

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

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for SB 789. Thank you for your time.

SB0789_MACC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FAV

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 21, 2025

SB 789 - Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, strongly supports **SB 789**, which strengthens the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program and increases resources to address food insecurity among college students. Food insecurity is a pressing issue for many community college students, who often juggle coursework, employment, and family responsibilities while struggling to afford basic necessities. No student should have to choose between paying for tuition and affording their next meal, yet too many students face that brutal reality. Hunger is not just a health issue—it is an academic issue that impacts student focus, retention, and overall success. Expanding funding for hunger-free campuses helps eliminate barriers that prevent students from reaching their full potential.

SB 789 increases the state's investment in the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, ensuring that more institutions have the resources to provide food assistance programs, on-campus food pantries, and emergency support services. By providing reliable funding for these efforts, this bill allows community colleges to sustain and expand hunger-relief initiatives, ensuring that no student falls behind due to food insecurity.

Addressing student hunger is not only a moral obligation but also a critical workforce development strategy. Ensuring students have the support they need to stay enrolled and complete their education leads to a more skilled workforce and a stronger state economy. Community colleges are committed to providing affordable, high-quality education, and SB 789 helps to ensure that food insecurity does not become a roadblock to student success. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** vote on **SB 789**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

SB0789_MdPHA.pdf

Uploaded by: Ilona Kabara

Position: FAV



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

**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.”¹

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.

¹ <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.

Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
PO Box 7045 · 6801 Oak Hall Ln · Columbia, MD 21045-9998 GetInfo@MdPHA.org
www.mdpha.org 443.475.0242

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

SB 789 UMBC SGA 2025 Hunger Free Campus Grant (3).

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV



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

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

HEARING DATE: February 21, 2025

POSITION: FAVORABLE

CONTACT: Jaden Farris, Chief of Staff — jadenfarris@umbc.edu

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**.



sga.umbc.edu



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sga@umbc.edu

SB 789 Hunger-Free Campus Support.pdf

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Position: FAV



Written Support

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee *Senate Bill 789 (Washington) Higher Education – Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations*

Matt Power, President
mpower@micua.org
February 21, 2025

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 55,000 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of support regarding ***Senate Bill 789 (Washington) Higher Education – Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations***. The Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program was established at a critical time when many students who experienced food insecurities were exacerbated due to the coronavirus pandemic. While this new grant program is available to Maryland public two-year and four-year institutions, students enrolled at private four-year institutions would greatly benefit. Hunger is a growing problem on college and university campuses; some figures estimate that up to half of college students will face food insecurities at some point while pursuing their degree. SB 789 expands the program by increasing the appropriated funds from \$150,000 to \$250,000. This expansion allows for a meaningful impact on current and new programs that address students with food insecurities.

This legislation grants MICUA institutions eligibility to be designated as a hunger-free campus and thus supports activities and initiatives already occurring on campuses that address student and community food insecurities. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Launched in 2016, **Stevenson University** has a campus food pantry run by student coordinators and volunteers. It holds regular hours and is in a central location on campus proximate to other student services. It holds food drives, disseminates public service announcements, and has a Facebook page.
- **Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA)** recently established a campus food pantry to serve its students, recognizing the importance of addressing food insecurities to promote both individual wellbeing and educational attainment. MICA also held a food drive in November as part of its annual campus-wide Unity Fest activities.
- The Frederick Food Security Network is a community gardening program through the **Hood College** Center for Coastal and Watershed Studies. It has established a network of community gardens to improve food security for residents of local food deserts, reduce local water pollution by diverting rooftop runoff for use as irrigation, and promote better eating habits and environmental stewardship.
- **Loyola University Maryland's** FreshCrate Program makes affordable and fresh produce available all year long in local stores along Baltimore's York Road corridor. It is part of the University's York

Road Initiative, which focuses on strengthening the community in areas including education, food access, and commercial revitalization.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of support for Senate Bill 789 on behalf of our member institutions. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Irnande Altema, Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs, ialtema@micua.org.

For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a favorable Committee report for Senate Bill 789.

SB 789 - Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Gra

Uploaded by: Matthew Capodanno

Position: FAV

SB 789

Higher Education – Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program – Alterations Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee February 21, 2025

SUPPORT

Senate Bill 789 increases the program funding for the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program by \$100,000, and allows private institutes of higher education eligible to receive the title designation of Hunger-Free Campus.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state. There are also communities and populations who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including communities of color. The causes of food insecurity are complex and often include additional factors such as low income, lack of reliable transportation, and missing community resources including grocery stores.

The Maryland Food Bank knows that higher education is a demonstrated pathway out of hunger. Yet for many Marylanders, higher education is out of reach due to barriers such as financial affordability, household and familial obligations, and logistical concerns including transportation and affordable housing. Through our College Pantry Program, we establish and support food pantries in partnership with colleges and universities, focusing on healthy food options as well as supports to lift students out of poverty, including workforce development opportunities, public benefit application assistance, and grant dollars for non-food resources such as toiletries and “remain in school” emergency funds. In FY 24, we operated pantries at 16 higher education sites and distributed the equivalent of over 150,000 meals to food-insecure students across the state.

Students are often an overlooked population for food insecurity efforts, yet the impact of assisting this group far outweighs any upfront cost in terms of the benefit of higher education to the student, their family, and their community. By bringing awareness to college campuses about available food assistance and connection to services such as SNAP enrollment, the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program is a valuable and effective response to the needs of this population.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 789.

Critical Issues Forum Testimony-Senate Bill-789 Hu

Uploaded by: Mitchell Glassman

Position: FAV



**CRITICAL ISSUES FORUM
ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**TESTIMONY OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES FORUM: ADVOCACY
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
BEFORE THE MARYLAND SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY,
AND THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTING
SB-789, HIGHER EDUCATION-HUNGER-FREE CAMPUS GRANT PROGRAM-
ALTERNATION**

ON FEBRUARY 21, 2025

FAVORABLE

Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Critical Issues Forum: Advocacy for Social Justice (CIF) supports Senate Bill 789, "Higher Education-Hunger Free Campus Grant Program-Alterations." CIF is composed of Temple Beth Ami, Kol Shalom, and Adat Shalom. It is a coalition of synagogues that includes over 1,750 families and three denominations of Judaism: Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist.

CIF strongly supports Senate Bill 789, which seeks to expand and improve the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program to address food insecurity among Maryland's college students. Food insecurity remains a significant issue on college campuses across the state. Studies have shown that many students struggle to afford adequate and nutritious meals, negatively impacting their academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a June 2024 report finding that only 2 in 5 food-insecure college students were eligible for SNAP benefits. And of those eligible, 59% did not take advantage of the program. In other words, most students who likely meet the eligibility criteria for the SNAP program are not benefitting from the program. By comparison, 18% of all U.S. households eligible for SNAP do not receive it, reflecting an 82% participation rate. Eligible college students' utilization of SNAP benefits is nearly four times worse than that of the general population. These findings underscore the challenges of college students who lack awareness of accessing SNAP benefits.

In 2021, the General Assembly established the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program to address student hunger. The law originally authorized \$150,000 in grant funds for public 2-year and 4-year colleges that establish programs that, among other things, assist students in enrolling in SNAP and connecting students with SNAP outreach partners. According to the Maryland Higher

Education Commission, nine colleges requested \$285,447 in grant funds for FY 2025. The Grant Program is popular among Maryland universities and community colleges but is underfunded.

Senate Bill 789 would continue to strengthen the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program by:

- Increased funding and eligibility to ensure more institutions can participate.
- Expand partnerships with local food banks and community organizations, provide at least one food pantry on campus, and enable students in need to receive food through a separate, stigma-free arrangement.
- Improving outreach and awareness of available resources for students in need.

We strongly support the legislative effort to increase funding to \$250,000 to expand grant funding available under the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. This limited incremental increase is a cost-effective way to improve the accessibility of SNAP for Maryland students who may already be eligible for benefits. These additional funding resources will ensure that Maryland's colleges and universities have the support necessary to reduce food insecurity and help students succeed. No student should have to choose between paying tuition and affording their next meal.

This bill would provide additional grant funds to colleges that engage in outreach and other efforts to increase SNAP participation and provide food-sharing and meal plan programs on campus.

We respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on SB 789.

Montgomery County Food Council

Uploaded by: Nanya Chiejine

Position: FAV



February 19, 2025

2025 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SB0789: Higher Education - Hunger-Free
Campus Grant Program - Alterations

BILL: SB0789: Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 789
BILL ANALYSIS: Requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to designate certain private institutions of higher education as hunger-free campuses.

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to SUPPORT the Senate Bill 789. We are providing this testimony to express our strong support for Senate Bill 789, which proposes critical enhancements to the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. This legislation aims to increase the annual budget from \$150,000 to \$250,000 beginning in fiscal year 2027 and expand eligibility to include private institutions for the "Hunger-Free Campus" designation, though not for funding¹.



The Imperative to Address Food Insecurity on College Campuses

Food insecurity among college students is a pressing public health concern that demands immediate attention. Studies have shown that food-insecure students are more than twice as likely to experience poor mental health outcomes, with nearly one in three considering suicide². Additionally, these students face significant challenges in academic performance and overall well-being².

Current Participation and the Need for Expansion

The existing Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program has seen significant interest and participation from public institutions across Maryland¹. However, as of now, no college campuses in Montgomery County have had the opportunity to participate³. Montgomery College, for instance, has demonstrated immense interest in addressing student hunger. A 2021 survey revealed that 36% of Montgomery College students experienced food insecurity, 48% faced housing insecurity, and 13% were homeless³.

Impact of SBo789 on Montgomery County

By increasing funding and expanding eligibility, SBo789 offers a positive opportunity to grow the program and focus on equity¹. More funding allows for a greater chance for more campuses, including those in Montgomery County, to participate³. This expansion is crucial for supporting Montgomery County students, ensuring their graduation, and enabling their future contributions to the local economy⁴.

The Case for Increased Funding

While the proposed increase to \$250,000 is a step in the right direction, it may not be sufficient to address the widespread issue of food insecurity among Maryland's college students¹. Given the state's budget capacity, a more substantial investment would enable the program to reach more institutions and, consequently, more students in need¹.



Conclusion

Senate Bill 789 represents a critical advancement in the fight against student hunger in Maryland. By enhancing funding and expanding eligibility, this legislation will empower more institutions to implement sustainable solutions to food insecurity, directly benefiting students' health, academic success, and future prospects. We urge the General Assembly to pass SB0789 and consider further increasing the program's funding to more effectively combat food insecurity across all Maryland campuses¹. Thank you for your attention to this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Nanya Chiejine, MPH
Executive Director,
Montgomery County Food Council

References

¹ Maryland General Assembly. (2025). *Senate Bill 0789*. Retrieved February 4, 2025, from <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/sb/sb0789F.pdf>

² Student Support Network. (2024, July). *New data reveals disturbingly high rate of food insecurity for many Maryland students*. Retrieved February 4, 2025, from <https://studentsupportnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/New-Data-Reveals-Disturbingly-High-Rate-of-Food-Insecurity-for-Many-Maryland-Students-0224.pdf>

³ Montgomery College. (2022, February 17). *Supporting basic needs like food and shelter: Federal grant aims to break down barriers*. Retrieved February 4, 2025, from <https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/news/features/2022-2-17-supporting-basic-needs-like-food-and-shelter-federal-grant-aims-to-break-down-barriers.html>

⁴ Montgomery County Government. (2023, April 27). *Community Needs Assessment Report 2023*. Retrieved February 4, 2025, from <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/CNA%20Report%202023.April%2027.pdf>



For more information, please contact Nanya Chiejine, Executive Director,
at nanya@mocofoodcouncil.org

The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources



P.O. Box 32212 | Bethesda, MD 20814 | 310-637-7071
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SB0789_Logendran_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Vathani Logendran

Position: FAV

**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

UMBC

vathanl1@umbc.edu