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Maryland State House Committee

March 11, 2021

TESTIMONY

HB 891 Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

Submitted by:

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Anne Arundel Community College**

Position: Support

I want to extend my gratitude to the committee for taking the time to hear and acknowledge my testimony concerning HB 891, which is meant to provide supplemental funding for the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. To the sponsors of this bill, I want to thank you on behalf of all sixteen Maryland Community Colleges, which comprise of over 500,000 students in total.

According to the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, food insecurity is defined as “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food in a socially acceptable manner.” It is unsurprising to learn that students who have access to food are more successful and more likely to achieve degree completion. Anecdotally in my role managing the food pantry at Anne Arundel Community College, I have heard students state with no uncertainty that the support from our campus pantry allows them to better focus on their studies, and therefore sets them up to achieve better grades.

Food insecurity represents a monumental barrier to educational completion and success. Hunger represents an immediate need that must continually be addressed. Imagine, if you will, how you would perform your day to day responsibilities on an empty stomach. Perhaps you would feel faint, “hangry,” distracted, agitated. No one does their best work when their body lacks sustenance.

In 2010, Anne Arundel Community College established an on campus food pantry program to provide shelf-stable nonperishable food to students experiencing hunger. Programs like this have grown tremendously over the last decade as awareness of depth of food insecurity for college students has made its way to the forefront attention in the higher educational world. Each of Maryland’s sixteen community colleges recognize the critical role that food access plays in the lives of our students. Whether we’re running on campus pantries, organizing food pickups, or offering fresh produce markets, we understand that students are people first, and helping them to meet their basic needs will allow them to flourish and excel not only in their educational aspirations, but as holistic humans.

I respectfully request your support of this bill so that college campuses in Maryland may continue offering basic needs resources to their students, who in turn will become productive members of our state workforce. Thank you for your time and consideration. On behalf of the Maryland Community Colleges, we are grateful for your dedication to public service, and your support of our students.