



Swipe Out Hunger
800 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90017
SwipeHunger.org

STUDENT HUNGER IS REAL. WE CAN HELP END IT.

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair of the House Appropriations Committee House Office Building Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT HB 891 (Davis) — Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

Dear Chair McIntosh and Committee Members,

On behalf of Swipe Out Hunger, I am here today to support Senate Bill 767, "The Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program." This vital measure would play an essential and urgent role in addressing hunger amongst Maryland's hard working college students. Our organization appreciates your committee and Sen. Mary Washington's leadership in introducing SB 767.

Before I dive into the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program and the impact it could have on students' futures, I wanted to share a few words from Maryland college students that speak to their experience.

"I would have to go a couple of days without substantial food, and usually there was some nice rice that I was giving my son, and I just didn't eat any of it. Or there would be banquets that I had to go to for school, and I would just take all the food [so I had something to give my son later].

"When the recession hit, my stepdad lost his job, and there was a month where my mom wasn't sure if she'd be able to make all the bills. And I ended up giving her my savings so that we could afford to make all the bills and get food."

"[Before going to school,] I made sure that I drank a lot of water because it's free and makes you feel fuller. I'm used to powering through the pain."

Every morning, these students wake up determined to improve themselves, their families, their communities, and their state -- all while facing hunger, poverty, and injustice. Yet, they do not blink or give up; instead, they continue to work, study, and persevere. Don't these students deserve the opportunity to learn and grow?

That is why I am here today: to fight for the estimated 100,000 Maryland college students who struggled with food insecurity before the COVID-19 crisis and the tens of thousands who will be added to the food insecure as our nation continues to fight the pandemic and its economic consequences.

Sen. Mary Washington and Del. Deborah Davis have taken the first step to end this hunger crisis in Maryland by introducing the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. I was new and naive to the world of policy when I first wrote this bill four years ago on the same laptop.



Swipe Out Hunger
800 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90017
SwipeHunger.org

STUDENT HUNGER IS REAL. WE CAN HELP END IT.

First introduced in California, our coalition passed the bill in 2017, sending millions of dollars for the first time to campuses to fight hunger. Since, the bill has been passed in California, New Jersey, and Minnesota, distributing more than 60 million dollars in grants to higher education institutions to end hunger on their campus. With this committee's blessing, I hope to add Maryland to that list of states.

So how have these dollars been making an impact on campus? In the last four years, the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program has:

- Renovated campus pantries with storage/refrigeration.
- Assisted thousands of students with SNAP pre-screenings, applications, and reporting.
- Trained hundreds of faculty, staff, and student leaders in basic needs best practices.
- Hired student assistants to raise awareness and support their peers in accessing anti-hunger programs.
- Launched text message apps, alerting students of leftover food at campus events.
- Collaborated with local restaurants such as Starbucks to receive donated grab-and-go food and local farmers' markets to purchase vouchers for produce.

Through this bill, statewide public institutions can have the opportunity to replicate these efforts in Maryland. Many of Maryland's colleges are already doing this work -- and funding from the Hunger-Free Campus Grant program would add fuel to the fire.

A 2019 study by the University of Maryland food pantry showed that at least 20% of students at the College Park campus experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months. National studies have also shown that one in three college students face food insecurity. These numbers only represent the tip of the iceberg with the continuing economic crisis that often impacts our most vulnerable students, including immigrants, veteran families, former foster youth, first-generation Americans, single parents, and communities of color.

This session, this legislative body made it loud and clear to the people of Maryland that our students' education is of the utmost priority. Maryland should be seen as a shining example of living out our shared values of education, self-determination, and community support. Let us make sure that Maryland prioritizes its college students by passing SB 767 out of committee and into law. Thank you for your leadership at this critical time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Sumekh", written in a cursive style.

Rachel Sumekh
CEO, Swipe Out Hunger