



**Mission:** *To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy*

**Vision:** *Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

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**HB891 Higher Education – Hunger Free Campus Grant Program – Established  
Committee: Appropriations  
Date: 3/12/2021  
Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chairwoman MacIntosh and members of the Appropriations Committee:

The Maryland Public Health Association appreciates the opportunity to submit this letter of support for HB891 “Higher Education – Hunger Free Campus Grant Program – Established”. This bill aims to create a state-funded matching-grant program to provide campuses with the resources to become a “Hunger-Free Campus.” This would entail the following actions; Establish a Hunger-Free Task Force; connect eligible students with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); provide on-campus food resources, raise awareness for food insecurity through campus events to reduce food insecurity stigma; and create a meal plan swipe-sharing program.

Food insecurity on college campuses is a public health concern, which has manifested detrimental effects on students’ academic performances and self-reported physical and mental health. Recent studies report between 30-50% of college students experience some level food insecurity across the country. That is nearly two-fold higher than the general public. Research from the University of Maryland to assess the prevalence of food insecurity among its students (4,901 students) found about 20% of UMD students were food insecure, and 20% experienced low or very low levels of food security. An additional 21% of the respondents reported marginal food insecurity levels. This is almost 2/3s of our own UMD students reporting some degree of food insecurity.

The statistics are even more pronounced at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). For example, a 2018 survey of students, faculty, staff, and administrators was conducted by Morgan State University’s Division of Student Affairs and found 68% of the students reported they were food insecure. The survey also found that 71% of students reported skipping meals because they had a limited supply of food, and 67% borrowed food or money due to a lack of food. Nutrition and health professionals who are connected to colleges and universities across the country have the ability to lead efforts to improve food security status of college students. This bill would provide them with needed support. We urge a favorable report on HB891.

*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.*