



EDUCATION, ENERGY, and the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 353
Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program - Alterations
February 22, 2023
Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 353. Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program – Alterations. The bill requires the Governor, beginning in fiscal year 2025, to include in the annual budget bill a \$1,500,000 appropriation for a matching grant program at public institutions of higher education to address hunger and food insecurity. For years, our institutions have lived the reality that an increased number of students are experiencing food or housing insecurity, and sometimes, living unsheltered.

In March 2021, the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University published a [survey](#) examining the pandemic’s impact on college students who were able to continue their education in this challenging environment. The report details students’ basic needs including access to nutritious and sufficient food; safe, secure, and adequate housing – to sleep, to study, to cook, and to shower; healthcare to promote sustained mental and physical well-being; affordable technology and transportation; resources for personal hygiene; and childcare and related needs. Basic needs security means that there is an ecosystem in place to ensure that students’ basic needs are met.

All USM institutions have food pantries, emergency funds, and/or other programs to help students meet their most basic need while they are matriculating at our institutions. The program and grant opportunities outlined in Senate Bill 353 would help enhance the institutions’ efforts.

Food insecurity is a predictor of persistence and retention and should be a concern for universities, especially those serving large numbers of students in higher-risk populations. Being able to meet those students’ needs will help increase their opportunities for success at USM institutions and beyond.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our favorable position on Senate Bill 353.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

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