

END HUNGER ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Let's help our students graduate and succeed.

An Act establishing the Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Initiative

[[SD1477](#)/[HD2969](#) Sen. Harriette Chandler, Rep. Andy Vargas, Rep. Mindy Domb]



College student hunger was a problem before the COVID-19 pandemic, and it will continue to be an issue unless systemic changes are made.

While the pandemic has granted students some temporary relief, such as expanded SNAP eligibility, there are still challenges for students accessing resources while institutions are not fully operational.¹

Our students need help - they cannot afford to go back to a system that left them hungry.

37% of public university students in Massachusetts are food insecure.²

Because of historic and contemporary divestment and discrimination, Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ students disproportionately experience food insecurity - at rates of 52%, 47%, and 46% respectively. Student parents also experience higher rates of food insecurity at 53%.³

Colleges and universities do not have the capacity or resources to adequately address food insecurity on their campuses.

- All public Massachusetts community colleges and universities have a single point of contact for students to access basic needs resources. However, most can only afford very few dedicated staff members.
- Only 20% of food insecure students utilize SNAP benefits.⁴
- Only four public institutions have a meal swipe donation program that allows students to donate unused meals in their meal plan to other students.
- While many public campuses have an on-site grocery store, none of them are approved EBT vendors, meaning students cannot use their SNAP benefits on campus.

With coordination and targeted resources, Massachusetts colleges and universities can help students complete college by expanding successful anti-hunger initiatives on their campuses.

Advancing the Department of Higher Education's equity agenda starts by addressing food insecurity that is disproportionately affecting students from marginalized communities.



¹ <https://hope4college.com/hope-center-statement-on-the-consolidated-appropriations-act-2021/>
²⁻⁴ <https://www.mass.edu/strategic/documents/2019%20HOPE%20Center%20MA%20Report.pdf>

The Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Initiative [SD1477/HD2969](#)

1. Capacity Building

- The Department of Higher Education will establish the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative, which will be available to all public higher education institutions and certain not-for-profit campuses that disproportionately serve low-income students.
- DHE will establish an Office of Capacity Building services to support public higher education institutions in understanding and addressing existing gaps in addressing food insecurity on their campuses.
- This office will provide technical assistance, administer and advise the Commissioner on the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, and submit reports to the Commissioner and legislature.

2. Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

The Office of Capacity Building will work with institutions to implement the following anti-hunger initiatives, and once these are implemented, the institution will be designated as a Hunger-Free Campus:

- Designate a college staff person to be the point of contact for the office.
- Establish a hunger-free campus taskforce.
- Notify students who receive need-based financial aid of their potential eligibility to receive SNAP, WIC, and other federal and state nutrition benefits.
- Host or participate in at least one hunger awareness event per year.
- Assess the need for on-campus food distribution, access to an off-campus food pantry, or an on-campus food pantry.

Institutions that have been designated as Hunger-Free Campuses and can demonstrate progress or commitment to instituting the following anti-hunger initiatives will be considered for grants:

- Develop a student meal credit sharing program.
- Create an emergency fund to support students in crisis with expenses including food, shelter, utilities, and childcare.
- Designate one or more staff persons whose responsibility is to assist food insecure students access basic needs resources.
- Conduct a campus-wide survey about food security and related topics once per year.
- Urge on-campus meal vendors to apply, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to become EBT vendors under the Restaurant Meal Program.
- Establish an on-campus food pantry.

To join the Massachusetts Hunger-Free Campus Coalition, contact Laura Sylvester (lauras@foodbankwma.org) or Molly Kepner (mkepner@gbfb.org)

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