

Legislative Analysis



HUNGER-FREE CAMPUS ACT

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House Bill 5097 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Jenn Hill
Committee: Higher Education
Complete to 10-11-23

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

SUMMARY:

House Bill 5097 would create a new act, the Hunger-Free Campus Act, which would create the hunger-free campus program. This program would be intended to aid students who lack basic needs while attending a *public institution of higher education* and aid in connecting college students with applicable resources to address their basic needs by establishing a grant program. The program would be administered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

Public institution of higher education would mean either of the following:

- A public community or junior college established under section 7 of Article VIII of the state constitution or under Part 25 of the Revised School Code.
- A state university described in section 4, 5, or 6 of Article VIII of the state constitution.

The purpose of the program would be to do all of the following:

- Address student hunger at public institutions of higher education.
- Leverage sustainable solutions to address basic needs on the campuses of public institutions of higher education.
- Raise awareness of basic-needs services offered on the campuses of public institutions of higher education.
- Build strategic partnerships at the local, state, and national levels to address food insecurity among students attending public institutions of higher education.

The bill would require MDE to designate a campus of a public institution as a “hunger-free campus” if the public institution does all the following in regard to that campus:

- Establishes a hunger task force that includes representatives from the student body and that meets at least three times per academic year to set at least two goals with action plans.
- Designates a staff member responsible for informing students about enrollment opportunities in this state's supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP).
- Provides options for students to use SNAP electronic benefits transfer (EBT) benefits at campus stores or provides students with information on establishments in the surrounding area where they can use SNAP EBT benefits.
- Holds an awareness day campaign activity or event during National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.
- Provides at least one physical food pantry on campus or enables students to receive food through a separate, stigma-free arrangement. A campus could partner with a local food bank or food pantry to meet this requirement.

- Develops a student meal credit donation program or designates a certain amount of funds for free food vouchers that might otherwise be raised through such a program. Each public institution of higher education could develop its own procedures for a meal donation program.
- Twice a year conducts a student survey on hunger, developed by MDE, and submits the results of the survey and a best practices campus profile to MDE at a time prescribed by MDE for inclusion in a comparative profile of each campus designated as a hunger-free campus. In the development of the survey, MDE would have to use any existing surveys designed to collect information on food insecurity among students enrolled in public institutions of higher education.

MDE would also have to do the following regarding the hunger-free campus grants:

- Based on the criteria used to designate a campus as a hunger-free campus, determine the amount of each grant on a competitive basis, prioritizing grants to institutions with the highest percentages of eligible Pell grant recipients enrolled.
- Ensure that each public institution of higher education that receives a grant uses the money to further address basic needs among its students.
- Ensure that each grant-receiving institution provides basic information to MDE explaining how the award was used and its deliverables and outcomes.
- Submit a report to the governor, the president of the Senate, and the speaker of the House of Representatives no later than three years after the hunger-free campus grant program is established. At a minimum, this report would have to include the number and amounts of the grant awards, the impact the grant program has had on establishing additional hunger-free campuses at public institutions of higher education and reducing the number of students experiencing food insecurity, and recommendations regarding the potential establishment of an annual appropriation for the grant program.
- Promulgate rules to implement the bill.

Finally, the bill would create the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program Fund in the state treasury for the sole purpose of funding these grants. The state treasurer would have to deposit money and other assets received from any source in the fund, direct the investment of money in the fund, and credit interest and earnings from the investments to the fund. MDE would be the fund administrator for audit purposes.

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 5097 would have an indeterminate increase of costs to the state and an indeterminate increase of costs to public colleges and universities. Under the bill, the Michigan Department of Education would be required to administer and monitor the program. MDE has noted that they do not currently handle any programs for higher education, so meeting these requirements would require an additional but currently indeterminate appropriation for the department.

Public universities and community colleges would face increased costs to implement the different aspects of the hunger-free campus program. Some aspects of the proposed program are already happening on a number of college campuses, such as a designated food pantry for students. Due to the variables in meeting all aspects of the hunger-free campus program, from conducting student surveys, creating a meal donation program, and establishing and running a food pantry, the increased costs faced by each of the 15 public universities and 28 community

colleges cannot be determined. Public universities and community colleges could receive grant funding to meet ongoing hunger-free campus program needs, but only after they are designated a hunger-free campus by MDE, if funding for the program is appropriated by the legislature, and if grant funding is awarded by MDE to the institutions that received the designation.

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