



May 20th, 2025

House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Written Proponent Testimony on HB 157

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, and Ranking Member Piccolantonio, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 157. My name is Kyle Thompson, and I am a policy associate at the Center for Community Solutions. The Center for Community Solutions is a nonpartisan policy and research center dedicated to delivering practical, data-driven solutions focused on improving health, social, and economic conditions for Ohioans. My written testimony today will focus on supporting the provisions under HB 157 to enact the Hunger Free Campus Act.

Higher education is an important opportunity that can drastically transform a person's life. Attending college can have a whole host of benefits, including better employment options¹, improved health and wellbeing², and higher salaries when compared to high school diploma holders. In fact, bachelor's degree holders earn on average 31 percent more than individuals with an associate's degree, and 74 percent more than those with a high school diploma³.

Despite these positive returns on investment, we find that there are still lingering problems that inhibit and deter college students from investing in their education. Rising costs of tuition means that less money can be set aside by students to address basic needs. These basic needs, when unaddressed, can impact classroom performance. One of the most pressing concerns related to these challenges is hunger, and broadly food insecurity.

Food insecurity among college graduates is substantial. Research from the Hope Center gathered data from over 90 colleges in 16 states between Spring 2023 and Summer 2024. Data from the study found that 41 percent of students experience food insecurity, and 59 percent (3 in 5) college students are struggling with basic needs security. In addition to

¹ Kawachi, I., Adler, N. E., & Dow, W. H. (2010). Money, schooling, and health: Mechanisms and causal evidence. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1186(1), 56–68.

² Goesling, B. (2007). The rising significance of education for health? *Social Forces*, 85(4), 1621–1644.

³ Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah. *The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings*. Retrieved from: [collegepayoff-completed.pdf](#)

these challenges, 48 percent of students are experiencing housing insecurity, and 73 percent of respondents face basic need insecurity.

HB 157 tackles food insecurity by spearheading the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. This program can be used to bolster existing supports by establishing an on-campus food pantry, providing information to students on services reducing food insecurity like SNAP or Medicaid, implementing emergency assistance programs, or building out an established meal plan credit program. Providing access to hunger reduction resources and programs helps keep Ohio college students ready to tackle coursework without worrying about their next meal.

Colleges and Universities that receive a Hunger-Free Campus designation can use grants to improve infrastructure, boost federal programs, raise awareness, and create partnerships on the local, state, and national level to address food insecurity. HB 157 also directs the Chancellor of Higher Education to prioritize universities and colleges with high percentages of Pell Grant enrolled students, who are disproportionately food insecure⁴.

HB 157 is important legislation because it shows that Ohio is willing to support higher education institutions working to improve the lives of college students, investing future minds that are able to make this state a leader in education and growth.

Thank you for your time. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to reach out.

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⁴ McKibben, Wu, & Abelson. *New Federal Data Confirm that College Students Face Significant—and Unacceptable—Basic Needs Insecurity*. Retrieved from: [New Federal Data Confirm that College Students Face Significant—and Unacceptable—Basic Needs Insecurity | The Hope Center | The Hope Center](#)