

Hunger Network in Ohio



Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, and Ranking Member Brown Piccolantonio:

I am pleased to stand today in support HB 157 – The Hunger Free Campus Grant Program. I am Deacon Nick Bates, director of the Hunger Network in Ohio – a statewide ministry that seeks to end hunger by addressing the root causes of poverty.

I hear regularly from campus ministries about the growing need on campuses across Ohio. Even at my alma mater, Capital University, they have experienced rising hunger on campus. In 2022-2023, they reported serving 170 students through the Cap Cupboard to help overcome the basic needs gap and provide food, hygiene items, and even support for students during breaks when students are away from school¹. These break times, while restful for some often mean closed dorms, closed dining halls, and a very stressful time for students experiencing poverty or housing insecurity.

Students cannot learn hungry. Food insecurity on college campuses leads to lower GPA's and lower completion rates.² And we are talking about a lot of students. Nearly 3 in 5 college students struggled with basic needs security.³ Food insecurity also contributes to long-term health barriers such as obesity, heart disease and type II diabetes.⁴

Early on in my career in the mid and late 2000s, I worked with youth and young adults who experienced housing insecurity and homelessness. Some of these young people are now working in construction, others in healthcare, and others in education or business. Some needed a degree and others needed certifications and trainings. Each story was different and unique, but a common thread amongst so many young people over the past 20 years is a desire to succeed.

This grant program grants the flexibility for universities and colleges to develop plans that work for their campus. The needs of students at Tri-C are different than the needs of students at Bowling Green or Capital University. With each campus able to adapt their own approaches, the state will also be able to learn and share effective strategies as a result of the reporting requirements of the use of these grant funds. Please support HB 157.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

¹ <https://www.capital.edu/student-life/health-and-wellness/health-resources/the-cap-cupboard/>

² <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/food-insecurity-college-campuses-invisible-epidemic>

³ <https://hope4college.com/files/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/rcreport2021.pdf>

⁴ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10217872/>