

**Proponent Testimony for H.B. No. 157**  
**Ohio House of Representatives Workforce and Higher Education Committee**  
**May 20, 2025**

**Submitted by:**  
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**Cleveland State University**

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Brown Piccolantonio, and members of Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, I want to thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony today in favor of House Bill 157, the Hunger-Free Campus Act. My name is Megan Ashwill. I have served as the Coordinator for the Lift Up Vikes! Resource Center and Food Pantry since fall of 2022. I have worked in higher education in many different capacities for the past decade. I bring my experience and expertise in student support and basic needs access to this testimony and provide full and unwavering support of this bill.

I have always sought jobs that fulfil me on both a personal and professional level and my current role has done this in a tremendous way. When I was a college student in 2009, and supported primarily by federal loans and generous Pell grants, I struggled to make ends meet while both working and pursuing my degree full time. I relied on SNAP benefits to help make it through some challenging times and often utilized our campus meal swipe exchange program and small staff-supported food pantry. I feel very blessed to have come full circle and now get to help connect CSU students with food assistance and support resources as they matriculate through college. My personal experience is just one of the many reasons I am so passionate about the Hunger-Free Campus Act. The impact I see daily in my work has cemented that this bill will positively impact the trajectory of many Ohio college students in need.

I see these same struggles I endured every day in the faces and stories of the students I serve at Cleveland State University. Lift Up Vikes! Pantry (affectionately referred to as LUV!) has been a well-established college pantry since 2016. We offer many different services such as our choice pantry, emergency support grants, SNAP and WIC enrollment assistance, and connection to local outside support resources. This past semester LUV! has served an average of 775 students and distributes roughly 5 and a half tons of food and hygiene products each month to our students in need.

It is a great privilege for our campus community to have LUV!, but I know that not every university across Ohio has the funds, resources, and provisions to support their students in this vital way. This bill would allow many campuses to change that reality.

At colleges around Ohio and the United States, students are struggling to survive and thrive while pursuing their academic endeavors. One of the leading reasons for student withdrawal from college is lack of support when it comes to basic needs. Our mission at LUV! is very simple.

We offer a convenient, dignified and compassionate process through which our students are connected to resources that supplement nutrition and other basic human needs as they strive to earn a college degree. No student should have to make the difficult choice to pay their cell phone bill or feed themselves that week or have their academic endeavors negatively impacted by hunger or food insecurity. This is a prime example of the sad and harsh reality our students are facing. Basic needs access like those offered through this bill would provide students with a helping hand in their overall academic success, allow them to stay enrolled, and eventually cross the finish line to graduation.

I am testifying on behalf of CSU today, but I am also speaking as voice for those universities and college students who desperately need this support to get a panty off the ground and running or create an emergency assistance grant for their campus communities. LUV! started very small. We were in a staff kitchen in our recreation center and over the years, as our community's needs grew, so did we.

I thank Representative Sean Brennan and Representative James Hoops for taking on this very important issue and sponsoring legislation to address food insecurity among college students. I'm pleased to support their efforts and ask that you vote yes not only to support students, but to bridge the gap of basic needs access for all Ohio college students.

Thank you.