



Testimony in support of S.847/H.1350  
An Act establishing a community college campus hunger pilot program  
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Higher Education  
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Limited or uncertain access to adequate nutrition is a serious problem among students in public colleges and universities in Massachusetts. According to a Wisconsin HOPE Lab report, food insecurity affected 44% of 2-year and 33% of 4-year Massachusetts students in 2018. The Temple University #RealCollege study of 2020 reported that 41% of students at Massachusetts public institutions cannot afford balanced meals and 40% worry about running out of food before they have money to buy more.

Having to study while hungry or worried about the next meal places students at a distinct disadvantage. The HOPE report found that 62% of community college students and 42% of university students reporting D and F grades were food insecure in the past year. They are also more likely to miss class. Moreover, food-insecure students reported moderate to severe depression at nearly double the rate of food-secure students.

S.847/H.1350 provides a first step in positioning community college students to succeed by ensuring they have enough to eat. In addition to providing food on campus, this bill requires colleges to provide access to off-campus food resources including federal nutrition programs like SNAP benefits, which are currently accessed by only 20% of food insecure students. Helping students finish college benefits Massachusetts employers who need qualified workers as well as enabling these students to achieve their potential.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has a rich history of advocating for public higher education, and for “programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency.” On behalf of our 3000 members in 47 local Leagues across the state from the Berkshires to Cape Cod, we support this bill and urge the Joint Committee to report it favorably. Thank you for the opportunity to present our position.