

SENATE No. 2535

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

SENATE, June 23, 2025.

The committee on Higher Education to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 939) of Joan B. Lovely, Joanne M. Comerford, Michael D. Brady, James B. Eldridge and other members of the General Court for legislation to establish the hunger-free campus initiative that would provide grants to institutions of public higher education to address student food insecurity and hunger, reports the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2535).

For the committee,
Joanne M. Comerford

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An Act establishing the hunger-free campus initiative.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 Chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

2 Section 48. (a) Subject to appropriation, there shall be a hunger-free campus grant
3 program managed by the department to provide grants to institutions of public higher education
4 to address student food insecurity and hunger. This grant program shall also be available to
5 municipally administered colleges and to minority-serving institutions as defined under 20
6 U.S.C. 1067k (3) as determined by the United States Department of Education. Funding for the
7 grant program may include, but not be limited to, appropriations from the Education and
8 Transportation Fund established in section 2BBBBBB of chapter 29.

9 Using funding allocated under the grant program, the department is authorized to hire a
10 director of the program who shall report to the commissioner. The director shall develop
11 guidelines and procedures governing the grant making process and the program using available
12 data pertaining to student hunger. The director may also conduct any additional surveys the

13 department deems necessary to understand gaps in addressing student food insecurity and hunger
14 eligible higher education campuses across the commonwealth.

15 The guidelines and procedures that govern the program shall specify any requirements
16 applicable to eligible institutions of higher education in order to apply and qualify for grants
17 under the program, including, but not limited to: (i) whether the institution has designated
18 campus staff to interface with the department; (ii) the existence and extent of any campus-level
19 hunger awareness programs, including notification to students of their rights to participate in
20 federal and state food assistance programs; (iii) whether the institution has established on-
21 campus meal vendors to accept available federal and state nutrition benefits; (iv) the existence or
22 development of a student meal credit sharing program; (v) income based standards by which
23 grant levels are determined according to the student population at each participating campus; and
24 (vi) any other pertinent criteria as developed by the department. The department shall further
25 develop and deliver technical assistance to assist eligible institutions of higher education to meet
26 the goals of this program.

27 (b) Subject to appropriation, the department shall award grants to institutions that have
28 met the guidelines and procedures established by the department and have submitted an
29 application to the department for a grant under this program. The department shall prioritize
30 regional equity and equitable distribution among types of institutions of public higher education
31 including the university of Massachusetts segment, the state university segment and the
32 community college segment in its distribution of grants. Upon recommendation by the director of
33 the program, the commissioner or a designee shall determine the amount of each grant which
34 shall be used by the institution to address food insecurity among its students in accordance with
35 the program and shall establish reporting guidelines for grant recipients.

36 (c) Annually, not later than July 1, the department shall submit a report on the hunger-
37 free campus grant program for the preceding fiscal year to the governor, the clerks of the senate
38 and house of representatives and the joint committee on higher education. The report shall
39 include the number and amounts of grants to eligible institutions well as a comprehensive
40 assessment of the program for the applicable year, including, but not limited to: (i) identifying
41 the institutions participating in the program; (ii) describing the activities supported by awards;
42 (iii) describing the level of student engagement in activities; (iv) describing and analysing the
43 outcomes resulting from activities, including, but not limited to, the impact of the program in
44 reducing the number of students experiencing food insecurity; and (v) recommendations on any
45 changes to the program.

46 (d) There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate
47 fund to be known as the Hunger-Free Campus Trust Fund administered by the commissioner of
48 higher education. The fund shall be credited with: (i) revenue from appropriations or other
49 money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the fund; (ii)
50 interest earned on such revenues; and (iii) funds from public and private sources such as gifts,
51 grants and donations. Amounts credited to the fund shall not be subject to further appropriation
52 and any money remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the General
53 Fund.

54 (e) Amounts credited to the fund shall be used to fund grants made pursuant to the
55 hunger-free campus grant program, and for the cost of administration of such program by the
56 department of higher education.

57 (f) Amounts received from private sources shall be approved by the commissioner of
58 higher education and subject to review before being deposited in the fund to ensure that pledged
59 funds are not accompanied by conditions, explicit or implicit, on the implementation of the
60 hunger-free campus grant program that may be detrimental to the program. The review shall be
61 made publicly available.

62 (g) Annually, not later than October 1, the commissioner shall report to the clerks of the
63 senate and house of representatives, the joint committee on higher education and the house and
64 senate committees on ways and means on the fund's activity including: (i) the source and amount
65 of funds received; (ii) the amounts distributed and the purpose of expenditures from the fund;
66 (iii) any grants provided to institutions of higher education and other stakeholder organizations;
67 and (iv) anticipated revenue and expenditure projections for the next year.