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SENATE BILL NO. 97

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled December 31, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact § 23.1-409.2 of the Code of Virginia, relating to institutions of higher education; Hunger-Free Campus Food Pantry Grant Program; establishment of student meal plan credit donation program.

Patron—Roem

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 23.1-409.2 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 23.1-409.2. Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program; "Hunger-Free Campus" designation.

A. As used in this section, "eligible private institution of higher education" means a nonprofit private institution of higher education whose primary purpose is to provide collegiate, graduate, or professional education and not to provide religious training or theological education.

B. The Hunger-Free Campus **Food Pantry** Grant Program (the Program) is established for the purposes of (i) addressing student food insecurity at public institutions of higher education and eligible private institutions of higher education; (ii) leveraging more sustainable solutions to address basic food needs on campuses of public institutions of higher education and eligible private institutions of higher education; (iii) raising awareness of services offered on campuses at public institutions of higher education and eligible private institutions of higher education to address food insecurity; and (iv) building strategic partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels to address food insecurity among students at public institutions of higher education. The Program shall be managed by the Council and available for participation by public institutions of higher education; however, participation in the Program shall be optional for such institutions. The Council shall review applications from such institutions, and if an institution satisfies the criteria set out in subsection C, it shall receive a "Hunger-Free Campus **Food Pantry**" designation and the Council shall award a grant to such institution. The Council shall prioritize grants and grant amounts to institutions with the highest percentage of students eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant enrolled in such institution. The Program shall be funded as grants are appropriated. An institution that receives a grant pursuant to this section shall utilize the funds to support on-campus efforts and initiatives to eliminate student food insecurity at such institution through the maintenance and operation of its food pantry *and student meal credit sharing program* established pursuant to subsection C.

C. To receive a "Hunger-Free Campus Food Pantry" designation and receive funding under the Program, a public institution of higher education or an eligible private institution of higher education shall establish an:

1. An on-campus food pantry or partner with a local food bank to provide information to students about food services in the local area. All food provided from the on-campus food pantry shall be free of charge, and no student shall be required to demonstrate food insecurity to access such pantry. However, an institution may require that an individual show a valid student identification card to access food from the on-campus food pantry; and

2. A student meal credit sharing program, whereby students may voluntarily donate unused meal plan credits to be distributed for use by other students at campus dining halls or at its on-campus food pantry, or to be used to support its on-campus food pantry. Each institution shall develop procedures for such meal plan credit donation program, including procedures for how a student may donate his unused meal plan credits and how a student in need can apply to receive any donated meal plan credits.