

Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

PUBLISHED: 2/11/2026 9:19 AM

ORIGINAL

Bill Number: SB97S1

Patron: Roem

Bill Title: Institutions of higher education; Hunger-Free Campus Food Pantry Grant Program; establishment of student meal plan credit donation program.

Bill Summary: Renames the Hunger-Free Campus Food Pantry Grant Program, established pursuant to applicable law, as "the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program" and amends the Program by expanding the criteria that a public institution of higher education or eligible private institution of higher education must satisfy to receive a designation as a "Hunger-Free Campus" and be awarded a grant under the Program to include a requirement that any such institution to establish both (i) an on-campus food pantry, pursuant to current law, and (ii) if applicable, 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 otherwise support its on-campus food pantry. The bill also requires grants awarded pursuant to the Program to be used to support on-campus efforts and initiatives to eliminate student food insecurity at such institution through the maintenance and operation of both its food pantry, pursuant to current law, and if applicable, its student meal credit sharing program established in accordance with the bill.

Budget Amendment Necessary: No

Items Impacted: N/A

Explanation: This bill impacts public institutions of higher education (IHEs). Fiscal impact is indeterminate but potentially significant for some IHEs. This program is voluntary participation so IHEs may elect not to participate if costs cannot be supported.

Fiscal Summary: Some responding public IHEs anticipate potentially significant costs to meet the provisions of this bill associated with increased staffing and administrative oversight, technology and vendor integration, and increased dining fees as a result of the student meal credit sharing program. While the provisions of this bill are voluntary, some IHEs anticipate the need for at least one additional full-time employee or additional personnel time to manage tracking, reporting, distributing meal plan donations, collaborating with dining vendors, and ensuring compliance if they choose to continue participation in the program. A few IHEs cited additional personnel costs ranging from \$15,000 – \$60,000 annually and additional operating expenses of \$10,000 – \$40,000 annually to maintain a program that meets the identified standards. Some IHEs indicate that the required meal credit donation system is not currently supported by their dining service vendors, so developing and implementing a compliant system would require technical integration and ongoing support that involves startup costs and annual system maintenance expenses, which one small IHE estimated at \$5,000 – \$20,000 one-time and \$2,500 – \$10,000 ongoing. If grant awards are not sufficient to support these costs, the costs may be passed on to students through increased dining fees.

Most IHEs work with external vendors for dining services, wherein contracts are designed around IHEs paying the contractors based on students' utilization of the associated dining plans. Contractors make assumptions

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about these utilization rates and modify contracts and ongoing rates accordingly. Contracts typically assume that most students use fewer meals than are included in their dining packages. If utilization rates increase because unused dollars and swipes are now used as donations, contract rates could increase proportionally and significantly, ultimately impacting dining fees to the IHEs as well as their students.

Additional IHEs anticipate minimal to no fiscal impact.

Because this is a voluntary program, IHEs may elect not to participate if costs cannot be supported.

Other: This fiscal impact statement is preliminary and based on feedback from agencies as of the date of publication.