WEST virginia legislature

2024 regular session

Committee Substitute

for

Senate Bill 292

By Senators Grady, Woelfel, Caputo, Jeffries, and Plymale

[Originating in the Committee on Education; reported February 14, 2024]

A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article, designated §18B-22-1, §18B-22-2, §18B-22-3, and §18B-22-4, all relating to creating the Hunger-Free Campus Act; providing for a short title; establishing the Hunger-Free Grant Program; providing for a legislative purpose; providing qualifications for a campus to be designated as hunger-free campus; requiring, subject to the availability of funding, Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission to allocate grant funding to each institution designated as a hunger-free campus; and requiring a report to the Governor and Legislature no later than two years after the establishment of the program.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 22. hunger-free campus act.

§18B-22-1. Short title.

This article shall be known and may be cited as the Hunger-Free Campus Act.

§18B-22-2. Enactment and purpose.

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission shall establish a Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. The purpose of the program shall be to provide grants to state institutions of higher education that have one or more campuses that are designated by the Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission as hunger-free campuses. The purpose of the grant funding shall be to:

(1) Address student hunger;

(2) Leverage more sustainable solutions to address basic food needs on campus;

(3) Raise awareness of services currently offered on campus which address basic food needs; and

(4) Continue to build strategic partnerships at the local, state, and national levels to address food insecurity among students.

§18B-22-3. Campus qualification.

In order to be designated as a hunger-free campus, the institution shall:

(1) Establish a Campus Hunger Task Force that meets a minimum of three times per academic year to set at least two goals with action plans;

(2) Designate a staff member responsible for assisting students with enrollment in West Virginia Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);

(3) Provide options for students to utilize SNAP benefits at campus stores that meet the federal standards set by the Food and Nutrition Service in the United States Department of Agriculture;

(4) Participate in an awareness day campaign activity and plan a campus awareness event during the National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week;

(5) Provide at least one physical food pantry on campus, or enable students to receive food through a separate, stigma-free arrangement;

(6) Develop a Swipe Out Hunger student meal credit sharing program, or designate a certain amount of funds for free meal vouchers that might otherwise be raised through a Swipe Out Hunger program; and

(7) Annually conduct a student survey on hunger, developed by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, and submit the results of the survey and a best practices campus profile to the Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission at a time prescribed by the chancellor for inclusion in a comparative profile of each campus designated as a hunger-free campus. In the development of the survey, the Chancellor may utilize any existing surveys designed to collect information on food insecurity among students enrolled in state institutions of higher education.

Subject to the availability of funding, the Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission shall allocate grant funding to each state institution of higher education that has one or more campuses designated by the chancellor as a hunger-free campus in accordance with the criteria established pursuant to this article. The chancellor shall determine the amount of each grant which shall be used by the institution to further address food insecurity among students enrolled in the institution. Any and all grant funding shall be made from any moneys received from legislative appropriations or from any other sources provided for purposes of this article.

§18B-22-4. Reporting requirement.

The Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission shall submit a report to the Governor, and to the Legislature, no later than two years after the establishment of the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the number and amounts of the grant awards, the impact the grant program has had on establishing additional hunger-free campuses at state institutions of higher education and reducing the number of students experiencing food insecurity, and recommendations on the expansion of the grant program.