

Makayla Anderson, Student, Rochester Community and Technical College

Testimony submitted to: Senate Higher Education Committee

In support of Hunger Free Campus Grant Appropriations

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Thank you, Chair Fateh and members of the committee, for taking the time to read my testimony. My name is Makayla Anderson, and I am a student at Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC). In addition to my studies, I serve as a LeadMN Student Advocate Intern, working to ensure that students across Minnesota have access to the resources they need to succeed. Today, I am testifying in support of Hunger Free Campus Grant appropriations because I have seen firsthand the critical role these initiatives play in the lives of students at RCTC.

At RCTC, we have free bags of food available for students, and every single day, they are gone by the end of the day. That alone speaks to the urgent need on our campus. This isn't just about a few students grabbing an extra snack—it's about dozens of students who rely on these resources to get through their day, their week, or even just the next few hours until they can eat again. I have witnessed students approach the food shelf table hesitantly, as if afraid of being judged for needing help. But the moment they realize that no one is judging them, that these resources are there to support them, the relief on their faces is undeniable.

Food insecurity is a much bigger issue at community colleges than most people realize. Many students are balancing full course loads while also working, supporting families, and trying to afford rent. When money is tight, food is often the first thing to be sacrificed. I have met students who go an entire school day without eating because they simply cannot afford to buy lunch. Imagine trying to focus in class while your stomach is growling, you feel lightheaded, and your ability to retain information is compromised. Hunger makes it harder to concentrate, harder to stay engaged, and ultimately, harder to stay in school.

That is why Hunger Free Campus initiatives are so vital. They remove a major barrier to student success by ensuring that no student has to make the impossible choice between paying for gas to get to school or buying a meal. When food is available, students can focus on what truly matters—learning, growing, and working toward their future.

The truth is, programs like these should not be the exception—they should be the standard. No student should have to struggle to meet their basic needs while pursuing an education. If providing free food on campus can help keep students enrolled, engaged, and thriving, then we need to do everything we can to expand and support these initiatives. Hunger Free Campus programs are about more than just food—they are about dignity, opportunity, and ensuring that every student has the chance to succeed.

Thank you, Chair Fateh and members of this committee, for your time and for considering the impact of these programs. Your continued support for Hunger Free Campus initiatives will make

a real difference in the lives of students across Minnesota. I appreciate your dedication to making higher education more accessible and equitable for all.

Sincerely,

Makayla Anderson