STATE OF NEW YORK

2645

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 26, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. L. ROSENTHAL, CLARK, SIMON, BICHOTTE HERMELYN, THIELE, GONZALEZ-ROJAS, KELLES, EPSTEIN, LUPARDO, CRUZ, FORREST, FAHY, SILLITTI, JEAN-PIERRE -- read once and referred to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to establishing the "hunger-free campus act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "hunger-free campus act".

§ 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 319 to read as follows:

§ 319. Hunger-free campus grant program. 1. The commissioner shall establish the hunger-free campus grant program pursuant to this section and regulations of the commissioner adopted for such purpose. Within the amounts appropriated for this purpose, the commissioner shall award grants on a competitive basis to public institutions for higher education which have one or more campuses that are designated by the commissioner as hunger-free campuses.

2. The purpose of the grant funding shall be to:

a. address student hunger;

b. leverage more sustainable solutions to address basic food needs on campus;

c. raise awareness of services currently offered on campus which address basic needs; and

d. continue to build strategic partnerships at the local, state, and national levels to address food insecurity among students.

3. a. For an institution to be designated as a hunger-free campus, such institution shall:

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(i) establish a hunger task force which includes student representatives from the student body that meets a minimum of three times per academic year to set at least two goals with action plans;

(ii) designate a staff member responsible for assisting students with enrollment in the state's supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP);

(iii) institute a system of educating the student body about the state's supplemental nutrition assistance program. This may include, but is not limited to, including information about SNAP in all financial aid information, including information about SNAP in new student orientation materials, including SNAP information on class syllabi, posting information about SNAP in all on-campus housing;

(iv) provide options for students to utilize SNAP benefits at campus stores or provide students with information on establishments in the surrounding area of campus where they can utilize SNAP EBT benefits;

(v) hold an awareness day campaign activity or event during the national hunger and homelessness awareness week that includes SNAP outreach and application assistance;

(vi) provide at least one physical food pantry on campus, or enable students to receive food through a separate, stigma-free arrangement. Such campus may partner with a local food bank or food pantry to meet the requirements of this subparagraph;

(vii) develop a student meal credit donation program, or designate a certain amount of funds for free food vouchers or gift cards that can be used at campus stores, eateries or local establishments. Each institution of higher education may develop its own procedures for a meal donation program; and

(viii) annually conduct or participate in a student survey on hunger and submit the results of the survey to the commissioner at a time prescribed by the commissioner for inclusion in a comparative profile of each campus designated as a hunger-free campus.

4. The commissioner shall allocate grant funding to each public institution of higher education that has one or more campuses designated by the commissioner as a hunger-free campus in accordance with the criteria established pursuant to subdivision three of this section. The commissioner shall utilize the hunger-free campus funding formula to determine the amount of each grant which shall be used by the institution to further address food insecurity among students enrolled in the institution. The commissioner or his or her designee shall prioritize grants to institutions of higher education with the highest percentage of Pell grant eligible students enrolled in the student body. Following the awarding of such grant funding, recipients will be expected to provide basic information to the department on how such grant award was used, its deliverables and outcomes.

5. The commissioner shall submit a report to the governor, the temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly, 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, examples of how students were supported by the program and how this funding helped them continue their education through to completion, examples of the impact the grant program has had on establishing additional hunger-free campuses at public institutions of higher education and reducing the number of students experiencing food insecurity, and recommendations regarding the potential establishment of an annual appropriation for the grant program.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.