

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Agriculture

BILL: SB 534

INTRODUCER: Senator Bernard

SUBJECT: Hunger-Free Campus Pilot Program

DATE: January 12, 2026

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Stokes-Ramos	Becker	AG	Favorable
2.			AEG	
3.			FP	

I. Summary:

SB 534, the “Hunger-Free Campus Act,” creates the Hunger-Free Campus Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (department). The program is meant to help fight hunger on the campuses of public postsecondary educational institutions. The program is established for one year beginning July 1, 2026.

The bill directs the Commissioner of Agriculture (commissioner) to identify the top three institutions with the highest percentage of Pell Grant-eligible students among all state universities and Florida College System institutions. Those three institutions shall participate in the program.

The commissioner shall develop a survey instrument requiring all participating institutions to meet certain requirements, including, but not limited to, establishing a hunger task force, designating a staff member responsible for assisting students in enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), providing options for students to use SNAP benefits on campus, providing at least one food pantry on campus, and conducting a student study on hunger.

The bill requires each participating institution to submit a report to the department describing how it implemented the pilot program. By December 1, 2028, the commissioner shall report on the program to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The report shall include, but is not limited to, the impact of the program on establishing hunger-free campuses at participating institutions; the impact of the program on reducing the number of students at such institutions who are experiencing food insecurity; and recommendations regarding future funding and implementation of the program on a long-term basis.

The bill directs the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to conduct a study evaluating food insecurity on the campuses of state universities and Florida College System institutions. The study must include recommendations for any changes to general law, Board of Governors' rules and regulations, or State Board of Education rules needed to address food insecurity on such campuses, by December 1, 2026.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Approximately one-third¹ of college students and 23 percent of undergraduate students² in the United States are food insecure, and more than half of the students enrolled in the Florida College System are low-income and first-generation.³ Food insecurity is associated with poor mental and physical health, as well as lower rates of academic success among students. Prior to the coronavirus crisis, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers identified food insecurity as a top barrier to student non-completion, and as a result of the pandemic 5.8 out of every 10 students have experienced basic needs insecurity.⁴ Despite recent awareness of food insecurity on college campuses, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that 83.8 percent of students experiencing food insecurity still did not receive any emergency aid.⁵

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).⁶ SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program, is the nation's largest domestic food and nutrition assistance program for low-

¹ DeBate, R., Himmelgreen, D., Gupton, J., & Heuer, J. N. (2021, October 7). Food insecurity, well-being, and academic success among college students: Implications for post COVID-19 pandemic programming. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 60(5), 564-579. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03670244.2021.1954511>

² Florida College Access Network. (2024). *The real cost of college in Florida*. <https://9a33652e.delivery.rocketcdn.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/24-FCAN-CostofAttendance-Brief-web.pdf> (last visited January 9, 2026).

³ Florida Department of Education. (2018, December). *Affordability in the Florida College System*. <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7724/urlt/FCS18-Affordability.pdf> (last visited January 9, 2026).

⁴ Florida College Access Network. (2020, July 1). *Nearly 3 in 5 college students struggle with food, housing insecurity due to Covid-19*. <https://floridacollegeaccess.org/research-and-data/nearly-3-in-5-college-students-struggle-with-food-housing-insecurity-due-to-covid-19/> (last visited January 9, 2026).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ The Food Stamp Program (FSP) originated in 1939 as a pilot program for certain individuals to buy stamps equal to their normal food expenditures: for every \$1 of orange stamps purchased, people received 50 cents worth of blue stamps, which could be used to buy surplus food. The FSP expanded nationwide in 1974. Under the federal welfare reform legislation of 1996, Congress enacted major changes to the FSP, including limiting eligibility for certain adults who did not meet work requirements. The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 renamed the FSP the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and implemented priorities to strengthen program integrity; simplify program administration; maintain states' flexibility in how they administer their programs; and improve access to SNAP. See United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. *A short history of SNAP*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/short-history-snap> (last visited January 9, 2026).

income Americans.⁷ For low-income households, increased spending on food is consistently and positively associated with diet quality and higher use and intake of both fruits and vegetables.⁸

To be eligible for SNAP, households must have a gross monthly income at or below 130 percent of the poverty line, have a net income at or below the poverty line, and have assets below certain limits based on whether or not the household has a member aged 60 or older who has a disability.⁹ The 2025 poverty line defined by the Health and Human Services was \$15,650 for a household of one and \$32,150 for a household of four.¹⁰ In the 2024 fiscal year, 2,969,000 Florida residents, or 13 percent of the state population, received SNAP benefits in Florida.¹¹

To qualify for SNAP benefits, students must meet additional criteria, such as working a paid job for a minimum of twenty hours a week. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates less than two-fifths of food insecure students meeting the additional requirements to meet SNAP eligibility.¹² The GAO reports that 59 percent of students potentially eligible for SNAP benefits did not report receiving benefits.¹³ Overall, while forms of assistance such as local food pantries and SNAP exist, many students do not take advantage of them due to the stigma associated, or because they do not qualify.

On July 4, 2025, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025¹⁴ was signed into law, with several provisions affecting the SNAP program.¹⁵ Among other changes, the law:

- Amends exceptions to the work requirement for able-bodied adults without dependents by increasing the upper age exception from 54 to 65 years, lowering the age of dependents from 18 to 14 years of age for exceptions based on responsibility to care for a dependent child, and removing exceptions for homeless individuals, veterans, and those 24 years and younger who aged out of foster care;

⁷ United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2025, July 24). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/> (last visited January 9, 2026).

⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2010, July). *Food expenditures and diet quality among low-income households and individuals (summary)*. https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FoodExpendDietQuality_Summary.pdf (last visited January 9, 2026).

⁹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2025, October 3). *A quick guide to SNAP eligibility and benefits*. https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-quick-guide-to-snap-eligibility-and-benefits#_ftn5 (last visited January 9, 2026).

¹⁰ United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. *Poverty guidelines*. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines> (last visited January 9, 2026).

¹¹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2025, January 21). *Florida Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*. https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_florida.pdf (last visited January 9, 2026).

¹² U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2024, June 24). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Estimated eligibility and receipt among food insecure college students*. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-107074> (last visited January 9, 2026).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ An Act to Provide for Reconciliation Pursuant to Title II of H. Con. Res. 14, Public Law No. 119-21, 50 Stat. 664 (2025). <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-119publ21> (last visited January 9, 2026).

¹⁵ United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2025, September 4). *SNAP provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 – Information memorandum*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/obbb-implementation> (last visited January 9, 2026).

- Changes the criterion that provides for states to request waivers to the time-limited work requirements when an area does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the individuals residing there; and
- Removes SNAP eligibility for certain lawfully present non-citizens, including refugees and survivors of human trafficking.¹⁶¹⁷

SNAP Eligible Foods

The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 defines eligible food under SNAP as any food or food product intended for human consumption except alcoholic beverages, tobacco, hot foods, and hot food products prepared for immediate consumption, with some exceptions.¹⁸ Nonfood items such as pet foods, soaps, paper products, medicines and vitamins, household supplies, grooming items, and cosmetics are ineligible for purchase with SNAP benefits.¹⁹

Campus Food Pantries

Nearly one third (29 percent) of college students have missed a meal at least once a week since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than half of all students have used off-campus food banks.²⁰

Campus food pantries are often run by campus student support services, student government, or the administrative department, and are for enrolled students facing food insecurity. Pantries may partner with organizations in the community to keep the shelves and freezers stocked and raise donations. Mobile pantries may also directly serve students in high need of hunger relief.²¹

Hunger-Free Campuses

The first Hunger-Free Campus bill was originally introduced in California in 2017 by then Assemblywoman Monique Limón. The Hunger-Free Campus policy provided funding to public colleges addressing student hunger on campus. Since its passage in California,²² additional states have formally passed Hunger-Free Campus legislation, including New Jersey,²³ Maryland,²⁴ Minnesota,²⁵ and Massachusetts.²⁶

¹⁶ United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2025, September 4). *SNAP provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 – Information memorandum*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/obbb-implementation> (last visited January 9, 2026).

¹⁷ United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2025, September 4). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 – Alien SNAP eligibility*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/obbb-alien-eligibility> (last visited January 9, 2026).

¹⁸ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 7 U.S.C. § 2012(k) (2026); see also 7 C.F.R. § 271.2 (2025).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Swipe Out Hunger. (2021, October 21). *Swipe Out Hunger acquires the College and University Food Bank Alliance*. <https://www.swipehunger.org/cufba/> (last visited January 9, 2026).

²¹ Feeding Florida. *Mobile pantries*. <https://www.feedingflorida.org/food-access/mobile-pantries> (last visited January 9, 2026). Note: Feeding Florida consists of 12-member food banks within its mobile pantry program.

²² Cal. Educ. Code § 66027.8 (2017)

²³ N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:62-60 (2019)

²⁴ Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 11-1703 (2021)

²⁵ Minn. Stat. Ann. § 135A.137 (2021)

²⁶ Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 15A, § 2 (2021)

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 534, the “Hunger-Free Campus Act,” creates the Hunger-Free Campus Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (department).

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The bill directs the Commissioner of Agriculture (commissioner) to identify the top three institutions with the highest percentage of Pell Grant-eligible students among all state universities and Florida College System institutions. Those three institutions shall participate in the program.

The commissioner shall develop a survey instrument requiring all participating institutions to:

- Establish a hunger task force, which must include representatives from the student body and meet at least three times during the life of the pilot program. The task force shall set at least two goals to address hunger on campus, each accompanied by an action plan.
- Designate a staff member responsible for assisting students with enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Provide options that enable students to use SNAP benefits on campus or provide students with information on authorized SNAP retailers in the area surrounding the campus where they may use SNAP electronic benefit transfer cards.
- Host an activity or event during Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week to promote awareness of hunger on the nation’s campuses.
- Provide at least one physical food pantry on campus or enable students to receive food at no cost through a stigma-free process. The campus may partner with a local food bank or food pantry to comply with this requirement.
- Develop a student meal credit donation program or designate funds that might be raised through such a program for free food vouchers.
- Conduct a student survey on hunger, using a survey instrument developed by the commissioner, and submit the results of the survey and a best practices campus profile to the department by a date prescribed by the department for inclusion in a comparative profile of each campus designated as a hunger-free campus.

The bill requires each participating institution to submit a report to the department describing how it implemented the pilot program and the program results. By January 1, 2028, the commissioner shall report on the program to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The report shall include, but is not limited to, the impact of the program on establishing hunger-free campuses at participating institutions; the impact of the program on reducing the number of students at such institutions who are experiencing food insecurity; and recommendations regarding future funding and implementation of the program on a long-term basis.

The department is granted rulemaking authority to implement the program.

The bill directs OPPAGA to conduct a study evaluating food insecurity on the campuses of state universities and Florida College System institutions. The study must include recommendations

for any changes to general law, regulations of the Board of Governors of the State University System, or State Board of Education rules needed to address food insecurity on such campuses.

OPPAGA must consult with the Board of Governors, the board of trustees of the Florida College System, the Department of Education, and any other relevant stakeholders to conduct the study. OPPAGA shall submit a report on its findings to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2026.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill has no impact on state revenues or expenditures. The pilot program is contingent upon legislative appropriation.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates an unnumbered section of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.