



DOAA

Georgia Department
of Audits & Accounts

Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

January 13, 2026

Honorable Bryce Berry
State Representative
509-B Coverdell Legislative Office Building
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
House Bill 716 (LC 61 0074)

Dear Representative Berry:

The bill would require the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) to establish a needs-based grant to address food insecurity. Eligible students must be enrolled at an eligible postsecondary institution, have a family income that is considered economically disadvantaged or have a financial aid gap, and meet academic or other standards established by GSFC. Students must also be classified as a legal resident of Georgia and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The maximum award per eligible student cannot exceed the highest cost meal plan of the student's postsecondary institution. Finally, the bill requires GSFC to establish criteria for students to retain the grant, as well as rules, regulations, and procedures to administer the program.

Grant Distribution Costs

GSFC data indicates the bill would require approximately \$545.4 million in state funds to support grant awards to eligible students (see Table 1). Estimates are based on an average grant award of \$5,000 and data on students enrolled in academic year 2023-24. Costs will vary depending on the actual number of students deemed eligible and meal plan costs.

Table 1. Estimated Cost of Needs-Based Food Insecurity Grant

	Number of Students ¹	Grant Per Student	Total Grant (in millions)
USG	82,874	\$5,000	\$414.4
TCSG	15,145	\$5,000	\$75.7
Private	11,062	\$5,000	\$55.3
Total award amount			\$545.4

¹ Figures are based on students with a Student Aid Index of 6,000 or lower enrolled during academic year 2023-24.

Assumptions used to generate the estimate are discussed below.

- **Eligible students** –The estimated number of eligible students is based on academic year 2023-2024 student enrollment and academic outcome data, as well as FAFSA data. The estimate identifies incoming freshmen who met the high school graduation requirements and sophomore, junior, and senior students with at least 30 credit hours and a 2.0 grade

point average. Eligibility for the Pell grant served as a proxy for students whose family income is considered economically disadvantaged or who have a financial aid gap. Enrollment changes at eligible institutions will likely impact the number of students eligible for the grant awards. For example, enrollment at USG institutions grew by approximately 11% from the 2023 to 2025 Fall semester.

It should also be noted that GSFC has the authority to determine the cost of attendance and financial aid gap under this bill, which could result in costs that exceed estimates presented in Table 1 if non-Pell-eligible students qualify for this award.

- **Meal plans** –The estimate assumes all students would receive an amount that is equal to the highest cost meal plan regardless of their classification (e.g., full-time, part-time). The meal plan cost of approximately \$5,000 is based on the average of the highest priced plans at 39 eligible University System of Georgia (USG), Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), and private institutions. Costs ranged from \$1,700 to \$8,700 based on prices for Fall 2025 and Spring 2026. Estimated costs do not include summer meals, which would increase costs. In addition, grant costs would increase as the cost of meal plans increase.

It should be noted that most TCSG institutions do not offer meal plans. While the estimate assumes the average meal plan cost would apply to TCSG students, GSFC would need to establish a method to determine grant amounts for students attending TCSG institutions.

Administrative Costs

GSFC estimates it would need approximately \$158,000 in one-time costs for database development, web development, and to create rules and regulations pertaining to the grant. GSFC also estimates annual administrative costs of \$92,000 for personnel.

Respectfully,



Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor



Richard Dunn, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

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