



September 22, 2023

Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member John Boozman
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Glen 'GT' Thompson
400 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member David Scott
468 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Making college students with low incomes a priority in the Farm Bill

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott,

The undersigned organizations urge you to support America's workforce by passing the Enhance Access to SNAP Act which will ensure that low-income college students do not have to choose between their education and eating.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress met the needs of college students who struggled with food insecurity by removing the barriers in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's (SNAP) eligibility requirements for low-income eligible college students to enroll in the program and access healthy and affordable food. These flexibilities have ended and this fall, students are returning to campus without access to vital nutrition support that was needed long before the pandemic began.

A large body of evidence confirms that food insecurity is a significant problem among college students, especially students of color, students with low incomes, older students, and students who are parents.¹² Data from the 2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study has provided the first nationally representative picture of food insecurity on

¹<https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/researchwire-summer-2018.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=928cc0a7-1eb3-4dde-a732-18df859bc887>

² <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-95>

campus, revealing that it affected 35% of Black students, 30% of Native American students, and 25% of Hispanic students, as well as 18% of whites and Asians.³ Food insecurity was most prominent at HBCUs and for-profit colleges, but existed throughout public, private, and nonprofit institutions as well. Food insecurity undermines not only the mental and physical health of college students but also their short-term success and long-term financial stability, with detrimental impacts on their academic performance and ability to complete their degree.⁴

The current SNAP eligibility rules for college students, regarding work-study or employment are counterproductive – too often limiting access to this important and effective program⁵ at a time when they are trying to improve their economic well-being by earning a higher education. In order to access SNAP, in addition to meeting income and other qualifications, low-income college students enrolled in higher education at least half-time must perform 20 hours of outside employment or work-study in addition to their full course load.

A full-time course load is typically 12 credits, meaning students may dedicate 36 hours a week to their education – outside of the hours they spend in class. This is typically the minimum. Requiring that they spend an additional 20 hours in a job can prove detrimental to their studies. In fact, it is estimated that working students are about 20% less likely to graduate than their peers who do not work.⁶

As to work-study, while it is commonly included in financial aid awards, it is not guaranteed. The reality is that demand for federal work-study outstrips supply. Only 16% of institutions award Federal Work Study to every eligible student and a low-income student at a community college has just a 5% chance to receive Federal Work Study.⁷

The Enhance Access to SNAP Act would no longer condition low-income college student eligibility on performing 20 hours of outside employment or work-study. This permanent law change is warranted and long overdue. Low-income college students, including many students of color, often face a disproportionate amount of barriers to

³<https://www.diverseeducation.com/reports-data/article/15543689/government-data-reveals-1-in-5-undergrads-are-food-insecure>

⁴ A Johns Hopkins study found that college students lacking adequate nutrition and food access are approximately 43% less likely to graduate than food-secure peers and 61% less likely to have an advanced degree like a master's or Ph.D. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2021/food-insecurity-during-college-years-linked-to-lower-graduation-rate>

⁵<https://frac.org/research/resource-library/snap-public-health-role-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-improving-health-well-being-americans>

⁶ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23328584221140410>

⁷ Community College Research Center, Columbia University, Policy Fact Sheet, July 2021: Participation in Federal Work-Study.

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/participation-federal-work-study.pdf>

even getting to college and deserve to be able to focus on their studies once they arrive. Removing these barriers will ensure more equitable SNAP access for low-income college students and better respond to their economic needs. In states like California, which allows more than 127,000 low-income college students to access food assistance through its CalFresh program, food insecurity among college students has decreased by more than 60%.⁸

Accordingly, we urge you to end these barriers in recognition of students who are struggling with poverty and facing life obstacles. Higher education pursuit and completion are increasingly crucial for an individual's long-term economic success and well-being, which, in turn, contribute to gains for the individual's family, community, and the nation. No one should have to sacrifice food to pursue a higher education. Please pass the Enhance Access to SNAP Act and put low-income college students on an equal footing to success.

Sincerely,

Food Research & Action Center, Unidos US, and National Urban League

National Organizations:

Access Reproductive Justice
American Muslim Health Professionals
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Bread for the World
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Threads
Equal Rights Advocates
First Focus Campaign for Children
Hispanic Federation
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
Islamic Relief USA
League of Women Voters of the United States
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Association of Social Workers

National Coalition for the Homeless
National Education Association
National Military Family Association
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)
National Rural Education Association
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
People Power United
Prosperity Now
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
RESULTS DC/MD
Skills2Compete Colorado
Sojourners-SojoAction
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Young Invincibles

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

Alabama:

Feeding Alabama

Alaska:

Food Bank of Alaska

Arizona:

Arizona Food Bank Network

Arkansas:

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

California:

AHRI Center

Alameda County Community Food Bank

Asian Resources, Inc.

Building Skills Partnership

California Association of Food Banks

California State University, Fullerton

California Youth Connection

Childhood Obesity Initiative

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations

Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County

Cypress College

Equality California

Everytable & Long Beach Fresh

FIND Food Bank

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

Food for People

Food Share

Food Share of Ventura County

Fresno City College

Fresno Unified

Fullerton College
GLIDE
GRACE/End Child Poverty California
Irvine Valley College
Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN)
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Mendocino Food & Nutrition Program INC, dba Fort Bragg Food Bank
Nourish California
OC Food Bank - CAP OC
Red Jen Ford Health & Wellness
Redwood Empire Food Bank
Reedley College
Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
San Diego Food Bank
San Diego for Every Child
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank
Santa Ana LULAC #147
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
SLO Food Bank
Student EOPS
University of California System
West Valley Community Services
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Westside Food Bank
Worcester Area Mission Society, UCC

Colorado:

Hunger Free Colorado

Connecticut:

End Hunger Connecticut!

District of Columbia:

D.C. Hunger Solutions

Delaware:

Food Bank of Delaware

Georgia:

North Fulton Community Charities

Hawai'i:

Hawai'i Appleseed

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Idaho:

Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force

Idaho State University

Illinois:

Illinois Hunger Coalition

Pack Away Huger

Indiana:

Feeding Indiana's Hungry

Iowa:

Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC)
Iowa Hunger Coalition

Kansas:

Kansas Action for Children

Kentucky:

Feeding Kentucky

Kentucky Equal Justice Center

Maine:

Full Plates Full Potential

Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition

Preble Street

Maryland:

Beth Am

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Critical Issues Forum

Manna Food Center

Maryland Hunger Solutions

RESULTS DC/MD

Massachusetts:

Belmont A.M.E. Zion Church

Central West Justice Center

Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester

El Buen Samaritano Food Program Inc

Food Insecurity Resistance Movement (FIRM)

Greater Boston Legal Services

Jeremiah's Inn

Thrive Support and Advocacy

Together for Kids Coalition

UMass Memorial Health

United Way of Central MA

Urban Action Institute

Worcester Community Action Council

Worcester Food Policy Council

Yes We Care, Inc.

Minnesota:

Hunger Solutions Minnesota

University of Minnesota Nutrition SNAP-Ed

Mississippi:

Feeding the Gulf Coast

Missouri:

Empower Missouri

After the Harvest

Montana

Child Care Resources, Inc

Nebraska:

Nebraska Appleseed

Nevada:

Silver State Equality

New Hampshire:

NH Hunger Solutions

New Jersey:

Latino Action Network Foundation

St. Matthew Trinity Lunchtime Ministry

New York:

Church Women United in New York State

Feeding New York State

FeedMore WNY

Food Bank of Central New York

Food Bank of the Southern Tier

Foodlink

Hunger Solutions New York

Rural Schools Association of NY

North Dakota:

Great Plains Food Bank

Ohio:

Ohio Association of Foodbanks

Oregon:

Olean Food Pantry, Inc

Oregon Food Bank

Pennsylvania:

Community Legal Services

Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

Sisters of Saint Joseph Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA

Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Philabundance

Rhode Island:

Rhode Island Community Food Bank

South Carolina:

SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center

Tennessee:

Tennessee Justice Center

Trenton Special School District

Texas:

Arts Educator, Teacher, Austin Community College,& Curator Women & Their Work

Austin Community College,& Women Their Work

Every Texan

Feeding Texas

House Of Praise Child Care

Houston Food Bank

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hidalgo County Texas

Utah:

Utahns Against Hunger

Vermont:

Hunger Free Vermont

Virginia:

Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

Virginia Hunger Solutions a project of Virginia Poverty Law Center

Washington:

Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition

Hunger Intervention Program (HIP)

Northwest Harvest

West Virginia:

Facing Hunger Food Bank

Wisconsin:

Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice