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.\(^1\) 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&Id=928c0a7-1eb3-4dde-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. 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.

The current SNAP eligibility rules for college students, regarding work-study or employment are counterproductive — too often limiting access to this important and effective program 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.

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.

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

---


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](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%20being-americans](https://frac.org/research/resource-library/snap-public-health-role-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-improving-health-well%20being-americans)

6 [https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23328584221140410](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23328584221140410)

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%.

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