



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.<sup>12</sup> Data from the 2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study has provided the first nationally representative picture of food insecurity on

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<sup>1</sup><https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/researchwire-summer-2018.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=928cco0a7-1eb3-4dde-a732-18df859bc887>

<sup>2</sup> <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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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>

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

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

<sup>7</sup> 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%.<sup>8</sup>

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