

May 23, 2024

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on  
Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20510 The Honorable

Glenn “GT” Thompson  
Chair, House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member, House Committee on  
Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chair Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the 63 undersigned organizations, we urge your committees to address the ongoing crisis of student food insecurity in the Farm Bill reauthorization. Specifically, while we appreciate recognition of the need for more outreach to college students in the *Farm, Food, and National Security Act*, the House Agriculture Committee’s Farm Bill discussion draft, we write to express our opposition to the provisions that would reduce Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and increase hunger among current and future food-insecure households, including many students.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, while we are encouraged that the Senate Agriculture Committee’s proposal, the *Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act*, avoids benefit cuts, we are disappointed by the lack of provisions to address college student hunger.

This Farm Bill is an opportunity to help the most low-income students access SNAP to bridge the gap between finishing their program of study and entering the workforce. Closing the gap between college student hunger and access to SNAP is more important now than ever with today’s college students increasingly balancing far more responsibilities than their studies. Nearly 1 in 4 college students are parents, almost half are financially independent, 64% are working, 6% are military-connected, and 19% have a disability.<sup>2</sup> SNAP is intended to serve these segments of the population— individuals working toward economic security for themselves and their families.

Despite studies showing that nearly 1-in-4 college students experience food insecurity<sup>3</sup> research also shows more than half of students who meet SNAP income limits do not access the benefits.<sup>4</sup> By comparison, among all U.S. households, enrollment in SNAP is substantially higher; 82

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<sup>1</sup> McKibben, B., Wu, J., and Abelson, S. (2023). [New Federal Data Confirm that College Students Face Significant—and Unacceptable—Basic Needs Insecurity](#). The Hope Center at Temple University.

<sup>2</sup> O’Sullivan, R. (2023). [The New Traditional Learner: Redesigning Higher Education to Drive Learner Success](#). The Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice.

<sup>3</sup> McKibben, et al. Supra note 1.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2019). [Food insecurity: Better information could help eligible college students access federal food assistance benefits](#).

percent of all eligible individuals access benefits, while 18 percent do not<sup>5</sup>. This disconnect between need and access is a result of confusing and burdensome SNAP eligibility requirements that arbitrarily exclude college students. Lack of SNAP access is a contributing factor that forces college students to make the impossible decision between meeting their basic needs or staying enrolled. Students who are food insecure are more likely to struggle with academics, reduce their course load, and consider dropping out of college altogether. In one study, 58% of learners blamed a lack of resources as a leading factor in their decision to stop out<sup>6</sup>.

In recent years, Congress took bipartisan action to simplify SNAP student rules to ensure that the most in-need students were able to stay in school without going hungry. Congress can take common sense steps towards addressing college student food insecurity in this year's Farm Bill Reauthorization. Continuing to exclude a large portion of college students from SNAP should not be characterized as reducing program costs, but as a long-term cost driver that increases the number of Americans with some college and no credential struggling to achieve economic security and more likely to need SNAP benefits throughout their lives<sup>7</sup>.

Several legislative proposals have been introduced and shared with you this Congress to help ensure that college students in need have access to SNAP. Proposals range from eliminating the student exemption, streamlining and simplifying the exemption, and increasing data collection on student hunger and data sharing between agencies to ensure SNAP-eligible students access the benefits. We implore you to consider these proposals without any benefit cuts or offsets that would reduce benefits to other food insecure households as your committees negotiate and move the Farm Bill reauthorization forward.

We thank you for your time and consideration on this issue.

Sincerely,

Today's Students Coalition  
Benefits Data Trust  
Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice  
National College Attainment Network  
The Hope Center at Temple University  
UAspire  
AFT  
America Forward  
Believe in Students  
Bottom Line  
Breakthrough Central Texas  
California Association of Food Banks  
California Competes

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<sup>5</sup> Hilliard, T. and McKibben, B. (2023). [\*Closing the College SNAP Gap: Strategies For States and Colleges to Reduce Food Insecurity Among Students\*](#). The Hope Center at Temple University.

<sup>6</sup> Munip, L. (2024). [\*Stopping Out: It's Not About Academics\*](#). CAEL.

<sup>7</sup> King, M. (2021). [\*One in Seven Social Safety Net Recipients in 2017 Were College Grads: Social Safety Net Participation Among College Educated\*](#). U.S. Census Bureau.

California Student Aid Commission  
Center for First-generation Student Success  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
Feeding New York State  
Feeding Texas  
Florida Policy Institute  
Food for People  
Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)  
Food Share Ventura County  
Generation Hope  
GLIDE  
GRACE/End Child Poverty California  
Higher Learning Advocates  
Hildreth Institute  
Hunger Free Colorado  
Hunger Free Vermont  
Institute for Higher Education Policy  
Jobs for the Future  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Michigan College Access Network  
More than Bootstraps  
NASPA  
National Association of State Student Grant and  
Aid Programs  
National Skills Coalition  
New America Center for Education and Labor,  
Higher Education Program  
Nourish California  
OC Food Bank  
Oregon Student Association  
Partners for Hunger-Free Oregon  
Redwood Empire Food Bank  
San Diego Hunger Coalition  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County  
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County  
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley  
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center  
Southern California College Attainment  
Network  
State Higher Education Executive Officers  
Association  
Student Basic Needs Coalition  
Student Veterans of America

Swipe Out Hunger  
The Education Trust  
The Resource Connection Food Bank  
University District Food Bank  
UPCEA  
Washington Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition  
Washington Food Coalition  
Washington Student Association  
William E. Morris Institute for Justice  
Young Invincibles