

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 65 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.¹ 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.² 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 insecurity³ research also shows more than half of students who meet SNAP income limits do not access the benefits.⁴ By comparison, among all U.S. households, enrollment in SNAP is substantially higher; 82

¹ 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.

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

³ McKibben, et al. Supra note 1.

⁴ 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 not⁵. 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 out⁶.

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 lives⁷.

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
2-1-1 Humboldt
AFT
America Forward
Believe in Students
Bottom Line
Breakthrough Central Texas
California Association of Food Banks

⁵ 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.

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

⁷ 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 Competes
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
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
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