



The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell,

Today's students who are currently enrolled in postsecondary education are likely to be older, working, and parenting. They also face substantial hurdles to attaining postsecondary credentials, many of which have always been in place but were significantly highlighted during the pandemic. The Today's Students Coalition—a group of 33 cross-cutting policy, advocacy, and membership organizations that have joined forces to advocate for urgently needed policy changes to better serve today's students—appreciates the steps federal policymakers have taken aimed at supporting students during the pandemic. But as the pandemic continues, we urge you to keep the needs of today's students top of your mind in future measures. By implementing additional policy changes and expanding existing programs, Congress can ensure that today's students are able to access the supports they need to succeed in higher education.

Food Insecurity

According to survey data from Chegg.org, 34 percent of students know someone who dropped out of school due to food insecurity, 35 percent of students communicated hunger as an impediment to their ability to study, and 49 percent of students who are student parents have experienced food insecurity.¹

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to low-income individuals and families. Prior to the pandemic, as a default, all postsecondary students were ineligible and could only receive SNAP benefits if they met specific exclusions to

¹ [2020 State of the Student: COVID-19 & Food Insecurity | Chegg.org](https://www.chegg.com/insights/state-of-the-student-2020)

the rule. Fortunately, the fiscal year 2021 appropriations bill expanded eligibility for two different types of students during the pandemic—students who are eligible for state or federally financed work study and students with an expected family contribution of zero were made eligible. As postsecondary students will continue to face food insecurity through and post-pandemic, we urge you to permanently extend these additional categories of student eligibility for the SNAP program to work toward ending college student hunger.

Supporting Students' Emergency Needs

During the pandemic, students saw unexpected expenses rise, including transportation, security deposits and rent, medical expenses, and unexpected bills. Working students also experienced the loss of employment or reduced work hours, including on-campus work study jobs. During the pandemic, Congress provided “emergency aid” funds to institutions of higher learning that allowed them to grant aid to help students who had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like food insecurity, emergency expenses will not cease to exist after the pandemic, and it is imperative that Congress enact a permanent emergency aid grant program that will allow schools to assist students who are facing financial emergencies that would otherwise force them to drop out of school.

Access to Affordable Broadband

Earlier in the pandemic when college campuses closed, college students lost access to on-campus libraries, computer labs, and connected devices to help them complete their studies. As courses moved online, we saw college students sitting in fast food parking lots trying to connect to WiFi in order to watch course lectures, or attempting to complete term papers on their mobile devices with cellular data. As a result, Congress passed the temporary Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program to expand broadband access to low-income households. Internet access continues to be essential for students' success in higher education, and we urge Congress to continue to expand connectivity for college students through the Affordable Connectivity Program, included in the Senate's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, that would make broadband benefits permanent.

FAFSA Verification

Earlier in 2021, the Department of Education made the decision to temporarily pause the FAFSA financial verification process due to the burden it places on many low-income students and their families. This financial verification pause made it possible for many students from the lowest income households to access financial aid without jumping through burdensome and unnecessary hoops that verification can present. Given that the country is still dealing with many challenges created by the pandemic, and research indicates that high verification rates do not typically lead to changes in students' aid amounts, we ask Congress to work with the Department to extend the pause on FAFSA financial verification to the 2022-23 cycle so low-income students face fewer hurdles to accessing aid and completing their education.²

² [Exploring Ways to Enhance FAFSA Efficiency: Exploring the Relationship Between FAFSA Verification and Pell Grant Award Change \(nasfaa.org\)](https://www.nasfaa.org/exploring-ways-to-enhance-fafsa-efficiency-exploring-the-relationship-between-fafsa-verification-and-pell-grant-award-change)

Finally, as important as it is to continue these critical benefits and provisions, it's equally important that existing and new benefits do not hinder or lessen students' receipt of federal financial aid.

As you continue deliberating next steps to support Americans during this time, we ask that today's students continue to remain a part of the conversation.

Sincerely,
The Today's Students Coalition

Higher Learning Advocates
Advance Vermont
Association of Big Ten Students
Association of Young Americans (AYA)
Center for First-generation Student Success
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Jobs for the Future (JFF)
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National College Attainment Network
National Skills Coalition
New America Higher Education Program
Student Basic Needs Coalition
Student Public Interest Research Groups
Student Veterans of America
The Jed Foundation
uAspire
Veterans Education Success
Young Invincibles