



May 25, 2023

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

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

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson, Chair
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Scott, Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the undersigned associations, representing two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities, I write to call your attention to the serious and pressing problem of food insecurity for many college students. As you craft the nutrition title of the farm bill, we urge you to streamline the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program’s (SNAP) eligibility requirements to make these benefits more accessible for students struggling with food insecurity as they pursue postsecondary credentials.

According to a 2021 study administered by The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, one in three college students (34%) report having low or extremely low food security, and another 13% report having marginal food security.¹ In fact, the food insecurity rate among college students is three times higher than among all U.S. households, underscoring the severity of the challenges facing this population. Also, based on a U.S. Government Accountability Office study, we know that among college students eligible for SNAP, only around 3 out of every 10 eligible students actually receive benefits.²

The value of a college degree or postsecondary credential in today’s economy cannot be overstated. Over a lifetime, individuals with a college degree, on average, earn nearly \$1 million more than individuals with only a high school diploma. Research consistently shows that obtaining a postsecondary credential is one of the most reliable ways to improve upward socioeconomic mobility and to increase employability in jobs providing family-sustaining wages. By giving individuals a stronger economic foundation, higher education in turn decreases the need for individuals to rely on SNAP or other federal benefit programs in the future.

Current SNAP eligibility requirements for students are complex and confusing, making it harder for students facing food insecurity to receive these benefits and less likely that they will complete their postsecondary education. Current eligibility requirements also complicate outreach efforts by colleges and universities and state and local governments to ensure that students eligible for SNAP receive these benefits.

We strongly encourage the committees to look for ways to simplify SNAP eligibility requirements for college students and make these benefits more accessible for those students who need assistance and who meet other income and asset requirements. This could include, for example,

¹ <https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/HopeSurveyReport2021.pdf>

² U.S. Gov’t Accountability Office, GAO-19-95, *Food insecurity: Better information could help eligible college students access federal food assistance benefits* (2018), p. 18.

expanding eligibility for students with a \$0 Expected Family Contribution as determined on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, representing financial aid recipients with the highest level of financial need. Similarly, SNAP eligibility could be expanded for undergraduate students who are considered independent for purposes of federal student aid, including veterans, active-duty military personnel, students with a history in the foster care system, and students experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The committees could also consider including higher education attendance as a qualification for SNAP for students who also meet other income requirements. Simplified pathways will also make it easier for states and colleges to verify student eligibility and to conduct outreach efforts to those eligible for these benefits.

By streamlining SNAP eligibility requirements and making these benefits more accessible, Congress can increase the number of individuals who successfully complete a postsecondary credential, allowing them to better provide for themselves and their families while contributing to our workforce and economy.

On behalf of our colleges and universities and the students they serve, we thank you for your attention to the growing problem of food insecurity among today's college students. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your staff to discuss these and other ways to better align SNAP requirements to meet the needs of the student population, and look forward to working with you as you seek to reauthorize this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream
ACPA-College Student Educators International
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American College Health Association
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Campus Compact

Career Education Colleges and Universities
Common App
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council on Social Work Education
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Association of System Heads
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities
UPCEA