

July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

The Honorable John Boozman  
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on  
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

On behalf of the **89** undersigned organizations representing a wide range of advocates, students, institutions of higher education, national and state higher education associations, labor unions, researchers, food banks, scholarship funds, and direct service providers, we urge you to address the urgent crisis of food insecurity facing families across the country, including students in higher education, by amending the Senate's draft *Agriculture Act of 2026*, otherwise known as the "Farm Bill."

It is essential for Congress to **reverse or delay the new requirements that shift Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit and administrative costs onto states**, which threaten to deepen food insecurity among students on campuses and communities across the country. Lawmakers must also seize this opportunity to **overhaul the complex SNAP student eligibility rules** that undermine federal and state investments in higher education and workforce development and make it harder for people with low incomes to combine work with education to achieve economic security. Additionally, we urge you to **remove administrative burdens and barriers** that prevent many eligible students from receiving SNAP benefits, and require greater coordination and outreach across federal agencies, states, and institutions of higher education to facilitate enrollment among eligible students, who lag far behind other eligible households in their ability to access the SNAP program.

Building a productive and innovative workforce that can meet the challenges facing our country requires that all students have pathways toward a postsecondary degree or workforce credential. Students and working families can only do so when they can meet their basic needs, including access to affordable, nutritious food, while enrolled in school. Students who meet their basic needs can focus on their studies, care for families, maintain their physical and mental health, and secure stable employment that leads to long-term economic security. Conversely, students who are food insecure are more likely to have a lower grade point average, take a reduced course load, and consider dropping out of college.<sup>1</sup> Food insecurity is also strongly associated with mental and behavioral health challenges, including depression and anxiety, among college students.<sup>2</sup>

Students across the country are contending with multiple forces that lead them to go hungry, even though most are working while enrolled. At a time when food prices continue to rise dramatically, federal

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<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., Martinez et al. (2020). No food for thought: Food insecurity is related to poor mental health and lower academic performance among students in California's public university system. *Journal of Health Psychology*; Raskind et al. (2019). Food insecurity, psychosocial health and academic performance among college and university students in Georgia, USA. *Public Health Nutrition*.

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., Oh et al. (2022). Food insecurity and mental health among young adult college students in the United States. *Journal of Affective Disorders*; Kim, Y., & Murphy, J. (2023). Mental Health, Food Insecurity, and Economic Hardship among College Students. *Health & Social Work*.

financial aid continues to lose purchasing power relative to the cost of higher education. Many students, particularly parenting students and those who attend part-time, have reduced access to safety-net programs like SNAP due to new rules, restrictions, and time limits passed last year. Public institutions of higher education, which educate three out of every four students, are facing budget cuts and fiscal uncertainty due to new state obligations to fund federal programs.

Unfortunately, the Committee's draft *Agriculture Act of 2026* misses a critical opportunity by failing to either reverse or delay the SNAP cost-sharing provisions enacted in the 2025 reconciliation law, or reform the outdated student eligibility rules.<sup>3</sup> As the Committee considers the draft Farm Bill during markup in the coming weeks, we urge you to amend the bill to ensure that students do not fall further behind.

Nationally representative federal data confirm that more than four million students across the country experience low or very low food insecurity, and undergraduate students experience food insecurity and hunger at twice the rate of all U.S. households.<sup>4</sup> Using U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) scales, these and other surveys have consistently documented much higher levels of food insecurity among first-generation students, Pell Grant recipients, parenting students, students with disabilities, and Black, Latino/a, Native, and Indigenous students. Additionally, hunger often persists throughout students' time in school. Over one-third of students who initially experience food insecurity are no longer enrolled in school after two years, and among those who remain enrolled, over four-in-ten who entered college experiencing food insecurity were still food-insecure two years later.<sup>5</sup>

While campuses across the country have attempted to address this issue by creating food pantries and emergency aid programs, these services often meet only a fraction of demand and do not provide a permanent solution to campus hunger. SNAP, our nation's largest and most successful anti-hunger program, could close much of this gap. A recent analysis from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) shows that most students who could benefit from this vital support do not receive it; of the 3.3 million college students who are likely eligible for SNAP, roughly *two-thirds* (2.2 million) report that their households do not receive SNAP benefits.<sup>6</sup> By comparison, just *18 percent* of all eligible U.S. households do not receive the benefits for which they qualify.<sup>7</sup> **In other words, students who likely meet SNAP's already-stringent eligibility criteria go without food assistance at nearly *four times the rate* of the general eligible population.**

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<sup>3</sup> Similar to the *Agriculture Act of 2026*, the nutrition title of *The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026*, H.R. 7567, 119th Cong. (2026), which passed the House on April 30, 2026, does not modify the SNAP provisions enacted in P.L. 119-21. See Congressional Research Service, *The 2026 Farm Bill (H.R. 7567): Comparison with Current Law* (R48918, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., McKibben, B., Wu, J., and Abelson, S. (2023, August). [New Federal Data Confirm that College Students Face Significant—and Unacceptable—Basic Needs Insecurity](#). The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs. When NPSAS was fielded in 2020, 23% of undergraduates and 12% of graduate students were food insecure, compared with 10.5% of U.S. households. Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2023, October). *Household Food Security in the United States in 2020*.

<sup>5</sup> Kara, M., Huelsman, M., and Abelson, S. (2026, June). [New Longitudinal Federal Data Reveal a Troubling Reality: Students' Basic Needs Insecurity Persists](#). The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2024, July 24). [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Estimated Eligibility and Receipt among Food Insecure College Students](#).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2023, February). *Reaching Those in Need: Estimates of SNAP Program Participation Rates in 2019*.

The SNAP student rules are confusing, counterproductive, and harmful for students in higher education. Current rules require students with low incomes who attend college more than half-time to either consistently work 20 hours per week on top of the time they spend in class, studying, meeting with faculty or academic advisors, and completing assignments, or meet a series of convoluted and confusing exemptions that are difficult for students and campuses alike to navigate. Research has indicated that students who are forced to work intensively while attending full-time are more likely to fall behind in class, receive lower grades, and stop out of college; for low-income students, working more than 15 hours per week is associated with a 22-percentage-point decrease in bachelor's degree attainment.<sup>8</sup> The rules also make it difficult for SNAP recipients who are not enrolled in higher education to go back to school for a degree or credential that leads to a better job and more earnings, because doing so would risk them losing food assistance under the penalties of the SNAP student rules.

The SNAP restrictions are based on outdated assumptions about a student population that has changed dramatically. Low-income students are disproportionately the first in their families to attend higher education, are taking care of dependent children, and are often enrolled in two- and four-year public colleges focused on career and technical education skills. The skyrocketing costs of food and higher education saddle them with debt, compel them to work long hours, and force many to forgo postsecondary education beyond an associate degree or short-term certificate program; more than a third of students now identify primarily as workers who go to school rather than as students who work.<sup>9</sup> The student population and educational demands on our workforce are significantly different than they were when the Farm Bill imposed draconian barriers to SNAP for college students nearly 50 years ago.<sup>10</sup>

Misconceptions about the nature of students' needs and deservingness have had damaging consequences, pushing many students to drop out or avoid higher education altogether, devastatingly relegating them to unstable, low-wage jobs, while people with more education often experience higher incomes, greater economic stability, and financial resiliency that leads to less need for public benefits.<sup>11</sup>

Along with the perpetual misalignment between students' experiences and SNAP rules, several provisions of the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* (OBBBA, Public Law No: 119-21) threaten to further derail students. Forcing states to bear 75 percent of administrative costs and cover a portion of benefit costs based on their error rates will force them to shoulder an average of over 200 percent in new SNAP costs. States will be forced into the same impossible situation that only occurs during deep recessions, resulting in cuts to vital social services, including public higher education. Indeed, for nearly one-third of states, these new fiscal obligations represent at least 10% of their state's higher education budget.<sup>12</sup>

As you reauthorize the Farm Bill, we urge you to remove the restrictions in SNAP that create barriers for college students with low incomes to access food assistance, reverse the new state cost-sharing

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<sup>8</sup> ACT Center for Equity in Learning. (2017, August). *Who Does Work Work For? Understanding Equity in Working Learner College and Career Success*.

<sup>9</sup> Trellis Strategies (2026). [Student Financial Wellness Survey Report: Fall 2025](#).

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Today's Students Coalition (2026). [Today's Students](#).

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Dickinson, M. (2021, October). SNAP, campus food insecurity, and the politics of deservingness. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 39(2), 605–616.

<sup>12</sup> Robertson, E. (2025, August). [SNAP Cuts Set to Endanger Basic Needs and State Higher Education Budgets](#). The Institute for College Access and Success

requirements that put those students at even greater risk, and reduce the administrative burdens that keep eligible students from the benefits they have earned. These steps will better align the program with the nation's education, economic, and workforce needs and address the persistent and widespread problem of food insecurity on campuses nationwide. Specifically, we ask Congress to amend the *Agriculture Act of 2026* to:

- **Reverse or delay the SNAP cost-shifting provisions.** OBBBA now requires states to pay a share of SNAP benefit costs for the first time in the program's history, and it cuts the federal share of state administrative costs in half—to just 25 percent.<sup>13</sup> By forcing states to absorb new benefit and administrative costs, these provisions will lead to even more eligibility restrictions, cuts to effective outreach programs, and more paperwork delays—the same kind of barriers that keep millions of eligible students from receiving benefits. Congress should maintain and restore full federal funding of SNAP benefits and the longstanding 50 percent federal match for administrative costs, which are essential for reducing hunger and eliminating the need for states to cut vital services or substantially increase taxes.
- **Reform the SNAP student rules so that students with low incomes are on equal footing with other people who are eligible for SNAP.** This is most easily achieved by permitting enrollment in higher education to satisfy SNAP's activity and participation requirements, treating it the same as paid employment or volunteer work. Alternatively, Congress could streamline the student exemptions so that they reach students with the highest risk of food insecurity (and who meet the income thresholds), including all students with dependent children or who act as family caregivers, Pell Grant recipients, students enrolled in other public benefit programs, and all students considered financially independent for purposes of federal student aid, including veterans and servicemembers, former foster youth, and students experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

In addition to reforming the student rules, Congress must address the administrative burdens in the SNAP program and ensure that all students who meet SNAP eligibility criteria are able to access and use their benefits. Many eligible students are unaware that they could receive SNAP as a direct result of the complexity of the student rules.<sup>14</sup> To improve outreach, awareness, and enrollment, Congress should:

- **Remove administrative burdens** such as the mandatory interview requirement that impedes access to SNAP and causes many otherwise eligible households, including college students, to become food insecure; leverage student data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to identify potentially eligible students, streamline SNAP enrollment; and modernize the benefit application and delivery processes.
- **Clarify and facilitate the ability of institutions of higher education to address hunger directly,** including accepting SNAP at on-campus stores that sell grocery items, allowing more students to use SNAP for prepared meals on campus; and creating new competitive grants to states and

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<sup>13</sup>One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Pub. L. No. 119-21 (2025), §§ 10105–10106. Beginning in FY2028, states with SNAP payment error rates above 6% must pay between 5% and 15% of benefit costs; beginning in FY2027, the federal share of state administrative costs falls from 50% to 25%.

<sup>14</sup> The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs (2025). [2023–2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report](#).

colleges that establish the same access to free- or reduced-price meal programs for students entering higher education as they do when enrolled in K-12 schools.

- **Require and provide funding for proactive outreach, coordination, and data-sharing** among and between USDA, ED, the Internal Revenue Service, state SNAP agencies, and institutions of higher education, to facilitate enrollment of potentially eligible students into SNAP. Additionally, USDA and state agencies should work jointly to collect information on the number of SNAP recipients currently enrolled in higher education and training programs, given the current lack of regularly reported data on student participation in SNAP.

Streamlining access to food assistance for students is a sound and worthy investment that promotes food security, supports educational attainment, better aligns SNAP with federal financial aid and other public benefit programs, and reduces bureaucracy and red tape.

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit these recommendations. The Farm Bill represents a significant bipartisan opportunity to address hunger and food insecurity for students and their families, and protecting SNAP from recent cost-shifting is essential to that goal. We look forward to working with you on these critical efforts.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations**

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs  
AFT: Education, Healthcare, Public Services  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)  
Believe in Students  
Campus Compact  
Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice at SNHU  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
EdTrust  
Excelencia in Education  
Food Recovery Network  
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)  
Hildreth Institute  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities  
National Education Association  
National Network for Youth  
New America Higher Education Policy Program  
SchoolHouse Connection  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Student Basic Needs Coalition  
Swipe Out Hunger  
The Institute for College Access & Success

Today's Students Coalition  
UnidosUS  
UPCEA - The Online and Professional Education Association  
Young Invincibles  
Youth Law Center

**Regional, State & Local Organizations, and Institutions of Higher Education**

211 Humboldt  
Achieve Atlanta  
Anne Arundel County Food Bank, Inc.  
California Competes  
California Food Banks  
Carolinas College SNAP Workgroup  
Center for Healthy Communities  
Church Women United in New York State  
City Colleges of Chicago  
City University of New York (CUNY)  
College Housing Northwest  
Colorado Center on Law and Policy  
Communities for Our Colleges  
Community College of Allegheny County  
CUNY Rising Alliance  
FoodShare South Carolina  
Grand Rapids Community College  
Greater Chicago Food Depository  
Hunger Free Colorado  
Hunger Free Vermont  
Hunger-Free Pennsylvania  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Just Harvest  
Just Strategy  
Kutztown University  
Last Mile Education Fund  
LeadMN  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Arizona (LAMA)  
Lutheran Engagement and Advocacy in Nevada  
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges  
Massachusetts Bay Community College  
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Mercyhurst University  
Michigan Community College Association  
Minneapolis College  
New Mexico Basic Needs Consortium  
Nossi College of Art & Design  
One Family  
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon  
Philadelphia Resource Pantry of West Chester University  
Pittsburgh Food Policy Council  
Portland State University

Riverland Community College  
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County  
Southwest Minnesota State University  
The Campaign for College Opportunity  
The City College of New York  
The Food Group Minnesota  
UMBC Retriever Essentials  
United Way of King County  
University District Food Bank  
University of California Student Association (UCSA)  
University of Oregon  
URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America  
Washington Postsecondary Basic Needs Coalition  
West Virginia University  
Western Technical College  
White Oak Foundation, Inc.  
Women Employed