

July 27, 2020

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

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

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Chairman  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Roberts, and Ranking Member Stabenow,

As you consider additional measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we write to urge you to suspend the work requirement in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for students enrolled in postsecondary education. This letter is a second request to Congress to waive the work requirement for students, following a letter submitted on April 21, 2020 that was signed by over 70 organizations. This letter is signed by more than 200 organizations.

In the midst of current economic turmoil and severe revenue loss in higher education, students have experienced widespread layoffs and reduced hours at both on and off-campus jobs, making their ability to meet a 20 hour-per-week work requirement extremely challenging. Suspending the work requirement will connect students with the essential nutrition they need to learn, promote college enrollment, and increase degree completion, all of which are essential to supporting our economic recovery.

The *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* (FFCRA) recognized the harm of the work requirement during the pandemic and lifted it for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependent Children (ABAWDs). However, the FFCRA overlooked approximately 3 million college students by failing to suspend SNAP's 20 hour-per-week student work requirement. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has noted that the student work requirement puts the substantial federal investment in higher education at risk since students face difficulty accessing SNAP and, in turn, may be less likely to complete degrees.<sup>1</sup>

Suspending the work requirement is also necessary to combat surging food insecurity among postsecondary students. A survey conducted at the beginning of the pandemic of more than 38,000 students attending 54 colleges and universities in 26 states found that *nearly 60% of undergraduates are experiencing food and/or housing insecurity*.<sup>2</sup> This included more than 70% of African American students, a clear threat to college attainment for a population enduring the effects of systemic racism and health disparities that have been exacerbated due to COVID-19.

Food insecurity is prevalent for students at both community colleges and those at four-year institutions, and it affects students who reside both on-campus and off-campus. Providing access to SNAP is especially critical when students are unable to use their on-campus meal plan or access on-campus food

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2018). Food insecurity: [Better information could help eligible college students access federal food assistance benefits](#). (GAO Publication No. 19-95) Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Goldrick-Rab, S., Coca, V., Kienzl, G., Welton, C.R., Dahl, S., Magnelia, S. (2020). [#RealCollege During the Pandemic: New Evidence on Basic Needs Insecurity and Student Well-Being](#). The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

pantries. Regardless of whether colleges return to in-person education or are primarily online, many of these facilities will remain closed for the foreseeable future due to health risks. During the pandemic, the survey found that only 15% of students dealing with food insecurity applied for SNAP. The vast majority of students did not apply because they thought they were ineligible. As the GAO previously reported, this has a great deal to do with the work requirement, which communicates that being enrolled in college is not work or even equal to work.<sup>3</sup>

Today's college students are willing and able to work. More than 70% of surveyed students held a job before the pandemic. Two-thirds of students reported experiencing job insecurity, with one-third having reported they recently lost a job.<sup>4</sup> Rates of student unemployment are unfortunately likely to rise as colleges are forced to enact significant budget cuts. Increasing access to SNAP will help students eat and learn, improving their educational attainment, and in turn, improve their economic mobility.

SNAP is a demonstrably effective program and an existing resource that must be strategically leveraged in this critical moment to ensure that students can continue and succeed in their pursuit of a college education during this difficult time. Studies have shown that, without access to food and proper nutrition, people can suffer from exacerbated stress, anxiety, and depression; sleep disturbances and fatigue; and impaired cognitive functioning. Access to SNAP relieves the stress of students worrying about where to find their next meal and allows them to focus on improving their educational and employment outcomes.

Lifting the SNAP work requirement for college students will have beneficial effects in nearly every community across the nation and will disproportionately help those enrolled in community colleges and regional universities. We urge Congress to ensure that the basic needs of postsecondary students are not left out of the upcoming response package. For these reasons, we request that you suspend the SNAP program's 20-hour-per-week work requirement for students in the next COVID-19 relief package.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
Achieving the Dream  
AFT Local 212 - Milwaukee Area Technical College  
Agape House at San Diego State University  
Allen Council on Aging  
Amarillo College  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Heart Association  
American Indian College Fund  
Aramark  
Arizona Justice Center  
Ashe County Sharing Center, Inc.  
Association of Community College Trustees  
Avodah  
Baltimore Lutheran Campus Ministry

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<sup>3</sup>U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2018). Food insecurity: [Better information could help eligible college students access federal food assistance benefits](#). (GAO Publication No. 19-95) Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup>Goldrick-Rab, S., Coca, V., Kienzl, G., Welton, C.R., Dahl, S., Magnelia, S. (2020). [#RealCollege During the Pandemic: New Evidence on Basic Needs Insecurity and Student Well-Being](#). The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

Believe in Students  
BestFit  
Black Learners Matter  
Blackhawk Technical College  
Blue Ridge Community College  
Bountiful Cities  
Bryan Alexander Consulting, LLC  
Bunker Hill Community College  
CalFresh Outreach Program, California Polytechnic State Univ.-San Luis Obispo  
Cañada College  
Carolina Youth Coalition  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Central Oregon Community College  
Challah for Hunger  
Challah for Hunger - UC Davis  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council  
Chemeketa Community College  
Church World Service  
Clarke University  
Cohen Strategy Group, LLC  
College & University Food Bank Alliance  
College Possible  
Colorado Center on Law and Policy  
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Congressional Hunger Center  
Course Hero  
CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute  
D.C. Hunger Solutions  
Degrees of Change  
Denver Food Rescue  
Denver Scholarship Foundation  
DePaul USA  
Dietel & Partners  
Dillard University  
DVP-PRAXIS Ltd  
ECMC Foundation  
Edquity  
ELCA Campus Ministry to the Brazos Valley  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Family Scholar House  
FAST Fund at AFT Local 212/Milwaukee Area Technical College  
Feeding Louisiana  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Food Chain Workers Alliance  
FOOD For Lane County  
Generation Hope  
Grayson College  
Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger  
Higher Learning Advocates

Highline College  
Hunger Free America  
Hunger Free Colorado  
Hunger Free New Jersey  
ICNA Council for Social Justice  
Illinois College Access Network  
Institute for Higher Education Policy  
Institute for People, Place, and Possibility  
Institute for Women's Policy Research  
Iowa & Minnesota Campus Compact  
Jewish Family Service of Greater New Orleans  
Juvenile Law Center  
Kapiolani Community College  
Klamath Community College  
La Salle University  
Lakeland Community College  
LeadMN - College Students Connecting for Change  
LIFT, Inc  
Linn-Benton Community College  
Los Angeles Valley College Family Resource Center  
Louisiana Appleseed  
Louisiana Budget Project  
Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families  
MAGIC Charities Foundation  
Maricopa County Community College District  
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Minnesota Office of Higher Education  
Montgomery College  
Moore College of Art & Design  
Mt. Hood Community College  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National College Attainment Network  
National Skills Coalition  
National Women's Law Center  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies  
New England Board of Higher Education  
New York State Association for College Admission Counseling  
NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation  
Normandale Community College  
Normandale Foundation  
North Carolina Alliance for Health  
North Central Texas College  
Northern Illinois Food Bank  
Northern Virginia Community College  
Northwest Harvest  
Northwestern Michigan College  
Oregon House District 29 - Representative Susan McLain  
Organic Growers School  
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

Partnership for College Completion  
Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges  
Philadelphia Futures  
Philly Home Girls LLC  
Pioneers for H.O.P.E. Basic Needs Program, California State— East Bay  
Portland Community College  
Project Self-Sufficiency  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Raise The Barr  
Rank and File Action Lehman College  
Reconstructing Judaism  
RESULTS  
Richmond Promise  
Rise  
Rockers4chAnge  
Saint Paul College  
San Diego City College  
San Diego City College, Continuing Education  
Santa Barbara Community College Foundation  
SchoolHouse Connection  
Scottsdale Community College  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina  
Secure the Student  
Sharing Excess  
Southern California College Access Network  
Southern Scholarship Foundation  
Spokane Falls Community College  
St. Vincent de Paul  
Student Basic Needs Coalition  
Student Parent HELP Center, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Student Sustainability Center, University of Oregon  
Student-Ready Strategies  
Sunset Health  
SUNY Schenectady County Community College  
Swaim Strategies  
Swipe Out Hunger  
Swipes for Philadelphia  
The Activist History Review  
The Century Foundation  
The City College of New York  
The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger  
The Education Trust  
The First 72+  
The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice  
The Jed Foundation  
The Western Center on Law and Poverty  
The Workers Circle  
Tri-County Technical College  
Turning Points for Children  
uAspire

Umpqua Community College  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Way of King County  
United Way of Southeast Louisiana  
University Innovation Alliance  
University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources  
University of California Graduate & Professional Council  
University of California System  
University of California, Berkeley  
University of California, Davis  
University of California, Irvine  
University of California, Los Angeles Center for Community College Partnerships  
University of California, Nutrition Policy Institute  
University of California, Riverside  
University of California, San Diego Graduate Student Association  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
University of California, Santa Barbara Thrive  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University of Oregon - Nontraditional Student Programs  
University of Oregon Urban Farm  
University of Toledo  
University of Washington Food Pantry  
University Student Senate of CUNY  
Washington Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition  
Western Oregon University Food Pantry  
WGU Labs  
WHEAT (World Hunger Education, Advocacy & Training)  
White Earth Tribal and Community College  
Wilkes Ministry of Hope  
Women Employed  
Women's Health Coalition of Arizona  
Women's Independence Scholarship Program, Inc.  
Young Invincibles