

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.¹

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*.² 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

¹ 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.

² 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.³

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.⁴ 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

³U.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.

⁴Goldrick-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
Peter Granville, 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