

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

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

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chair, House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 2051

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

Nationally data released in 2023 revealed that more than 4.3 million students in higher education experience food insecurity, and **undergraduate students experience food insecurity and hunger at twice the rate of all U.S. households.**

Basic needs insecurity severely threatens students’ ability to complete higher education, harms economic growth, and contributes to people leaving college without a degree or credential.

We applaud Congress’ bipartisan recognition of student needs during the COVID-19 pandemic when it simplified eligibility for SNAP for students already at risk of food insecurity, including for those who had a \$0 “Expected Family Contribution,” or EFC (now the Student Aid Index, or SAI)—meaning they did not have any family financial support for their college education—as well as those who were eligible for federal or state work-study. This timely bipartisan action prevented untold numbers of students from dropping out of higher education altogether and further imperiling our nation’s economy.

Unfortunately, the expiration of these flexibilities in mid-2023, during a time of higher food and grocery prices, has diminished the ability of students to afford their education. Student food insecurity existed before the pandemic, and students and families now face dire challenges once again.

While campuses across the country have attempted to address this issue by creating food pantries and closets, these services are often only able to meet a fraction of the demand and do not provide a permanent solution.

As you reauthorize the Farm Bill, **we urge you to remove restrictions in SNAP that create barriers for college students with low incomes to access food assistance.** There are several common-sense bipartisan opportunities to improve the SNAP restrictions on postsecondary education, including:

- **Streamline SNAP eligibility** by allowing enrollment in higher education to satisfy activity and participation requirements, and putting students with low incomes on equal footing with other individuals who are eligible for SNAP. Principally, Congress should incorporate the *Enhancing Access to SNAP (EATS) Act* into the Farm Bill to remove harmful “work-for-food” requirements on students;
- **Reinstitute bipartisan provisions** providing access to SNAP for students who do not have the financial means to contribute out-of-pocket to higher education (including students with a Student Aid Index of less than or equal to 0) and those who are eligible for federal or state work-study, to qualify for food assistance without being subject to additional activity and participation requirements, as proposed in part by the *Student Food Security Act*;
- **Expand and simplify student exemptions** to include populations of students at high risk of food insecurity who meet the income eligibility thresholds, including all students who have dependent children of their own; students who act as family caregivers; Pell Grant recipients; students and families enrolled in other public benefit programs; and students considered to be financially independent for purposes of federal student aid (as proposed in part by the *Student Food Security Act* and the *College Student Hunger Act*), including veterans and servicemembers, former foster youth, and students experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Streamlining access to food assistance for students is a sound and worthy investment that promotes food security, supports educational attainment.

Sincerely,

XXX