

August 1, 2019

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senate  
SH-317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-2103

The Honorable Alfred "Al" Lawson Jr.  
United States House of Representatives  
1406 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-0905

Dear Senator Warren and Representative Lawson:

On behalf of the higher education associations listed below, I write in strong support of S. 2143/H.R. 3809, the College Student Hunger Act of 2019. We thank you for introducing this important legislation, which will provide needed tools and resources aimed at ensuring that students will not go hungry as they pursue higher education.

There has been a growing awareness in recent years about the serious problem of hunger and food insecurity on campus. Colleges and universities have engaged in a number of efforts to try and address this issue. Hundreds of campuses have established food pantries and more than 650 campuses are now members of the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA). Some campuses stock basic foods in their emergency assistance offices while others provide emergency grants to enable needy students to purchase food. Other campuses allow students to donate unused meals on their campus meal plan to fellow students through an anonymous swipe card. These and other campus initiatives to combat food insecurity are an important part of efforts to enhance student success and increase completion.

In December 2018, in response to Senator Warren's request, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report examining the scope of food insecurity at colleges and universities and ways to make existing local, state or federal benefits, and programs more accessible and effective in serving students. The GAO report revealed that more than 30 percent of today's college students may face food insecurity. It also found that nearly 2 million students at risk of going hungry were eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—the main federal food insecurity program for low-income Americans—yet did not receive these benefits.

The problem of food insecurity is a real one—and one that takes a serious toll on the health, emotional, and educational well-being of affected students every day. As one student told the GAO, “Sometimes I get home at the end of the day and realize I haven’t eaten all day. And then I realize my school work is not up to my actual ability—I definitely think not eating affects my grades. You can tell when you don’t feel good that you can’t do your best work.”

The College Student Hunger Act would remove barriers that prevent low-income students from accessing SNAP benefits. For example, the bill expands the list of eligibility for SNAP to include students eligible for a Pell Grant and students with an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$0. For low-income students who meet food eligibility requirements by working, the bill lowers the threshold from 20 to 10 hours per week. The bill also amends a current rule that prohibits students residing on campus who participate in campus meal-plans from accessing SNAP, making these students eligible for that program during the winter and summer months when meal services may not be in operation or students are off-campus.

In addition, the bill includes important notification and outreach initiatives to increase student awareness of SNAP eligibility and to help students apply for and access these benefits. It requires the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to notify students who have an EFC of \$0 or who are eligible for a Pell Grant that they may be eligible for SNAP and to refer them to a state website where they can apply for these benefits. And it requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to update its outreach plans, both to raise college and university awareness that many of their students are eligible for SNAP and to help students access and use these benefits. The bill also directs FNS to work with ED to carry out a limited number of pilot projects to test ways to make SNAP more useful for college students going forward.

We greatly appreciate your efforts in crafting this legislation to help alleviate hunger on campus. We look forward to working with you as this bill moves forward.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell  
President

On behalf of:

ACPA-College Student Educators International  
ACT, Inc.  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities  
American Association of University Professors  
American College Health Association  
American Council on Education  
American Dental Education Association  
American Indian Higher Education Consortium  
Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools  
Association of American Colleges and Universities  
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  
Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities  
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources  
Common App  
Conference for Mercy Higher Education  
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area  
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities  
Council for Opportunity in Education  
Council of Graduate Schools  
Council of Independent Colleges  
EDUCAUSE  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
National Association of College and University Business Officers  
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities  
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators  
UPCEA  
Yes We Must Coalition