

The Student Food Security Act of 2024

Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Chris Murphy, Senator Alex Padilla, and Senator Bernie Sanders

A 2024 [Government Accountability Office \(GAO\) report](#) revealed nearly 3.8 million college students may face food insecurity, risking their college completion and undermining federal and state investments in higher education. This problem is particularly pronounced among community college students. A [recent survey](#) found nearly 40% of community college students are food insecure, over half are housing insecure, and 14% have experienced homelessness. Students who are worried about where their next meal will come from or where they will sleep at night will naturally have difficulty focusing on their education. In fact, 55% of students facing food insecurity [reported](#) deciding not to buy a required textbook, and 25% reported dropping a class.

Typically, college students face severe restrictions on their ability to access Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits unless they meet certain conditions, such as working more than 20 hours per week or having young children. These stringent requirements ignore the reality of today's college students, a [majority of whom are "non-traditional"](#) – older than 25, independent from their parents, and often juggling school, work, and family responsibilities. The [GAO report](#) also found almost sixty percent of potentially eligible students were not receiving SNAP.

The *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021* temporarily expanded access to SNAP for college students during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has worsened food insecurity among college students and exacerbated racial disparities in hunger. A nationwide survey of students in fall 2020 by the Hope Center at Temple University found that 70% of Black and 70% of American Indian or Alaska Native students experienced food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness—rates substantially higher than their white peers. This bill would make that expansion permanent and provide other support to ensure students can access the program.

The *Student Food Security Act of 2024* removes barriers to accessing SNAP for low-income college students by expanding eligibility criteria, requiring the federal government and states to take a more proactive role in outreach to food-insecure students, and creating a grant program for colleges and universities to support their students by coordinating resources on their campuses.

The Student Food Security Act:

1. **Increases the SNAP eligibility of low-income college students** by expanding eligibility to students who qualify for work study, have a \$0 Student Aid Index, meet the criteria for a maximum Pell Grant (even if they have not filed the FAFSA), or are an independent student whose household is otherwise eligible.
2. **Increases outreach to eligible students** by directing the U.S. Department of Education to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and other relevant agencies to notify students they may be eligible for benefits when they file their application for federal student aid.
3. **Requires the Department of Education to collect data** on food and housing insecurity.
4. **Creates a SNAP student hunger demonstration program** to allow students touse their SNAP benefits at on-campus dining facilities at up to ten institutions.
5. **Establishes a \$1 billion per year grant program** to help institutions of higher education identify and meet the basic needs of their students such as food, housing, childcare, etc. Grants can be used for research, planning, and implementation of strategies which educate students on federal state, local, and tribal assistance programs. Institutions with increased numbers of Pell Grant recipients will be prioritized. At least 25% of grants must go to community colleges, and at least 25% must go to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities, and other Minority-Serving Institutions.