

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