

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair
U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the 67 undersigned organizations, institutions of higher education, advocates, and researchers supporting the basic needs of students in higher education, we write to request that you include **\$45 million** for the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program (“**Basic Needs Grant**”) at the U.S. Department of Education in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Millions of students in higher education lack sufficient food or a stable living situation, which hinders their ability to graduate. They also face immense challenges in accessing affordable childcare, physical and mental healthcare, reliable transportation, and textbooks and supplies. Despite the Committee’s investments in essential financial aid programs like the Pell Grant, Federal Work-Study, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, students still regularly confront unexpected emergencies and increases in the cost of living. These financial burdens are often devastating for students balancing school, work, and family responsibilities; many students are one surprise medical bill or layoff away from stopping out of college. The Basic Needs Grant program amplifies other federal, state, local, and institutional resources that address these barriers, improving students’ ability to stay enrolled, complete their degrees and credentials, and successfully enter the workforce.

Student basic needs insecurity is an alarming and extensively documented crisis. Nationally representative federal data show that nearly one in four (23%) of undergraduate students have low or very low food security (twice the food insecurity rate of all other U.S. households), translating to **3.8 million** students.¹ Nearly 1 in 10 students are experiencing homelessness, totaling **1.5 million** students.² Additional survey data also shows that rates of basic needs insecurity are much higher for students from low-income backgrounds or who face other challenges, including Pell Grant recipients, working adults, parenting students, first-generation students, former foster youth, and students at community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, and other Minority Serving Institutions.³

¹ Government Accountability Office. (2024, June). [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Estimated Eligibility and Receipt Among Food Insecure College Students](#). GAO-24-107074.

² McKibben, B., Wu, J., and Abelson, S. (2023, August). [New Federal Data Confirm that College Students Face Significant—and Unacceptable—Basic Needs Insecurity](#). The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs.

³ The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs. (2025, February). [The Hope Center 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report](#); Trellis Strategies. (2025, April). [Student Financial Wellness Survey, Fall 2024 Results](#).

Securing basic needs is also vital to ensuring students can persist and graduate: more than 4-in-5 students who stop out of college cite basic needs insecurity as a reason for leaving school.⁴

The Basic Needs Grant program has already become highly competitive since the Committee's initial investment in FY21. The Department could only award grants to 13 percent of eligible applicants in FY23, the last cycle for which applicant data is available. However, funding has still reached colleges and universities in 22 states and Puerto Rico through FY24, including Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Rural, suburban, and urban-serving colleges have all received support. Institutions have utilized grant funding to establish and expand basic needs centers on campus, enhance efforts to connect students with federal, state, and institutional benefits they may be eligible for, and strengthen institutional and community partnerships that provide vital services to students in need.

Reflecting the substantial demand and significant return on investment, we ask you to increase support for this program to **\$45 million**, the same level as two other Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) programs in FY24. Increased funding will enable more colleges and universities, systems of higher education, and state higher education agencies to provide comprehensive support for their students, which can then be replicated nationwide.

No other federal program supports these comprehensive basic needs interventions, and state and institutional funding cannot meet the current needs of students or scale up effective approaches. Public and tax benefit programs support many students and families but fail to reach most of those experiencing basic needs insecurity due to complex eligibility rules that often exclude those enrolled in postsecondary education. Addressing students' basic needs will also improve persistence and completion rates among students enrolled in other federal financial aid and public benefit programs.

It is essential that Congress address the crisis of student basic needs insecurity to improve affordability, retention, and completion in higher education. Basic Needs Grants help support these goals for institutions of higher education with limited resources and help scale badly needed interventions to reach more students in need. We are thankful for the support that Congress has provided for the Basic Needs Grant in previous fiscal years and appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs
American Association of Community Colleges
American Council on Education
Association of Community College Trustees
Campus Compact
Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice at SNHU
EdTrust
Excelencia in Education
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Fostering Academic Achievement Nationwide (FAAN)
Generation Hope
Hildreth Institute
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

⁴ The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs (2025). *Supra*, note 3.

John Burton Advocates for Youth
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP)
National College Attainment Network
New America Higher Education Policy Program
SchoolHouse Connection
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Student Basic Needs Coalition
Swipe Out Hunger
The Campaign for College Opportunity
The Institute for College Access and Success
Thurgood Marshall College Fund
Today's Students Coalition
uAspire
UPCEA - The Online and Professional Education Association
Young Invincibles
Youth Law Center

Regional, State, & Local Organizations and Institutions of Higher Education

Achieving Maximum Potential - Iowa's Foster Care Youth Council
Anne Arundel County Food Bank
Bunker Hill Community College
California State University
Center for Economic Justice and Action
Church Women United in New York State
Community Food Bank of San Benito County
Detroit College Access Network
DOE Hawai'i Child Nutrition Programs
End Child Poverty California
Fostering Success Michigan
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Latino Community Development
LeadMN
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Arizona (LAMA)
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Nourish California
Oregon Hunger Task Force
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community College
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Tennessee Justice Center
The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania
The URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America
United Way of King County
University of California Student Association (UCSA)
University of California System
University of California, Davis
University of California, Riverside
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Barbara

University of California, Santa Cruz
University of California, Berkeley
Washington Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition
Washington's Postsecondary Basic Needs Coalition (PSBNC)
Western Michigan University Seita Scholars Program