

# College Student Hunger Act of 2019

Senator Elizabeth Warren and Congressman Al Lawson

*A recent Government Accountability Office report, requested by Senator Warren and several of her Senate colleagues, revealed that more than 30% of college students might face food insecurity. The report also found that almost 2 million at-risk students who are potentially eligible for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) did not receive benefits in 2016.<sup>1</sup>*

*Congressman Al Lawson has been a national leader addressing food insecurity among college students and has previously introduced legislation to fight this problem. Senator Warren and Congressman Lawson are proud to team up to introduce The College Student Hunger Act of 2019, legislation to end hunger on college campuses.*

*The College Student Hunger Act of 2019 would remove barriers to low-income college students in accessing SNAP benefits by expanding the eligibility criteria. The Act would also enable the federal government, states, colleges and universities to take a more proactive role in providing outreach and support to food-insecure students.*

## Section-by-Section Analysis

**Section 1. Title.** College Student Hunger Act of 2019

**Section 2. Eligibility of college students to participate in SNAP:** Expands the list of criteria, as set out in the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, that permits low-income college students to be eligible for SNAP by adding: students eligible for a federal Pell Grant; or who receive \$0 expected family contribution (EFC); or who are classified as “independent” (e.g., who are in foster care, who are veterans, or who are homeless). For low-income students who meet the criteria by working, the bill lowers the current 20 hours per-week work requirement to 10 hours. Also amends a current rule to allow on-campus students who financed a meal plan to be eligible to apply for SNAP, which is particularly important for winter and summer months when meal services may not be in operation or when students are off campus.

**Section 3. Snap eligibility notification:** Requires the Department of Education to notify students who have a \$0 EFC or who are eligible for a Pell Grant that they may be eligible for SNAP, and to refer them to state websites where students can apply for benefits.

**Section 4. Communication of information on student eligibility for SNAP:** Requires FNS to update the current outreach plan guidance to states in a way that increases awareness among states and colleges about student hunger, student eligibility for SNAP, and how states and colleges can help eligible students access and use their SNAP benefits. Requires the USDA Inspector General to conduct an audit of the outreach practices used by FNS to make colleges and universities aware of student eligibility for SNAP.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), “Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits,” December 2018, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/696313.pdf>, pages 11, 19.

**Section 5. College student hunger demonstration pilot program:** Requires FNS to work with the Department of Education to carry out demonstration pilot projects to test ways to make SNAP more useful to college students. Projects will test models that allow students to use SNAP to purchase prepared food from dining halls and on-campus restaurants, and that allow students to apply SNAP benefits directly to offset the cost of a student meal plan.

**Section 6. Effective date:** The Act will take effect on the first day of the fiscal year that begins after the date of enactment of this Act.