



Enhance Access to SNAP (EATS) Act of 2021

Student work requirements, known as “work for food” rules, continue to serve as barriers in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and impede student learning, health, and stability. **The Enhance Access to SNAP Act (EATS Act), introduced by Reps. Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Josh Harder (D-CA), and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), would permanently expand SNAP eligibility to students who attend college part-time or more by amending the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to include “attending an institution of higher education” as a form of qualification the same as work.** Under H.R. 1919, SNAP would no longer require eligible students to perform work study or 20 hours per week of outside employment in order to receive critical nutrition.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, research from The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice found that food insecurity was a serious problem on college campuses across the nation, especially for students of color, first-generation students, low-income students, and students at community colleges:



Food insecurity impacts 39% of students at two-year institutions and 29% of students at four-year institutions.



65% of students who identified as LGBTQ experienced basic needs insecurity.



Students of color were more likely to experience basic needs insecurity; 75% of Indigenous, 70% of Black, and 70% of American Indian or Alaska Native students experienced food insecurity, housing insecurity, and/or homelessness.



45% of students reported recent struggles to afford or access food before COVID-19.

SNAP eligibility rules for students are overly complicated and do not include college students unless they are eligible for one of the exemptions to the rule, which includes working 20 hours per week or participating in a federal or state work-study program. The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, signed into law on December 27, 2020, temporarily extended SNAP eligibility to students who are eligible for federal or state work-study and students with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$0 (including students eligible for the maximum Pell Grant). These temporary student eligibility changes for SNAP will remain in effect until 30 days after the federally-declared COVID-19 public health emergency ends.

While temporary exemptions to the general SNAP college student eligibility rule will ease access during the COVID-19 public health emergency, the EATS Act would permanently ensure more equitable SNAP access for low-income college students. This legislation also eliminates the documentation and paperwork requirements of students and agency staff for the existing SNAP student exemptions, which can prevent eligible students from receiving SNAP benefits.