

March 25, 2026

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

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 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 Hope Center for Student Basic Needs and **91** undersigned organizations, institutions of higher education, advocates, and researchers supporting student success in higher education and workforce development, we write to request that you include **\$45 million** for the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program (also known as the “**Basic Needs Grant**”) at the U.S. Department of Education in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 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 course materials. Nearly one in four (23%) of undergraduates—approximately **3.8 million students**—have low or very low food security, a rate twice that of all other U.S. households.¹ Nearly 1 in 10 undergraduate students, or **1.4 million**, are experiencing homelessness.² Rates of basic needs insecurity are much higher among students from low-income backgrounds or facing 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

Despite the Committee’s essential investments in federal financial aid programs, students still regularly confront unexpected emergencies and persistent increases in the cost of living that can be devastating for students balancing school, work, and family responsibilities. 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. 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

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](#).

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

The Basic Needs Grant program has been in high demand since the Committee first created it in FY21; the cut-off score for funding in FY24 was a remarkable 109.67 out of 110 possible points—meaning applicants needed *essentially a perfect score* to secure a grant.⁵

However, funding has still reached colleges and universities in 22 states and Puerto Rico, 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.

While there was no funding for the Basic Needs Grant in FY25 due to the U.S. Department of Education’s decision to redirect Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) funds, **we deeply appreciate the Committee’s bipartisan work to reinstate the program in FY26**, and we eagerly await the opening of this year’s grant competition.

We ask you to increase support for Basic Needs Grants to **\$45 million in FY27** to reach the same level as the two leading FIPSE received last year, and without cutting funding from other education and health programs. Increasing funding for this vital program will enable dozens 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 students’ needs or scale up effective approaches. Public and tax benefit programs support many students and families but fail to reach most who experience 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. More students will enter the workforce prepared to succeed, boosting economic development in communities across the country.

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 (38)

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs
AFT: Education, Healthcare, Public Services
American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Council on Education (ACE)
Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)
Campus Compact
Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice at SNHU

⁵ U.S. Department of Education. (2026). [*Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program: Awards & Legislation*](#).

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
College Unbound
Complete College America
Council for Opportunity in Education
EdTrust
Excelencia in Education
Food Recovery Network
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Fostering Academic Achievement Nationwide (FAAN)
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National College Attainment Network
National Education Association
National Skills Coalition
New America Higher Education Policy Program
SchoolHouse Connection
Student Basic Needs Coalition
Swipe Out Hunger
The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania
The Institute for College Access & Success
Today's Students Coalition
Trellis Strategies
uAspire
UnidosUS
United States Student Association
Young Invincibles
Youth Law Center

Regional, State, & Local Organizations and Institutions of Higher Education (54)

Achieve Atlanta
Alray Scholars Program
Bunker Hill Community College
California Community Colleges
California State Student Association
Carolinas College SNAP Workgroup
Cedar Crest College
Center for Economic Justice and Action
Center for Healthy Communities
Central Lakes College
Central United Methodist Church, Albuquerque
Church Women United in New York State
College Housing Northwest
Colorado Higher Education Basic Needs Coalition
Community College of Allegheny County
Detroit College Access Network (DCAN)
FoodShare South Carolina
Greater Chicago Food Depository

Harrisburg Area Community College
Hildreth Institute
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Johnson College
LeadMN
Linn-Benton Community College
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Arizona (LAMA)
Luzerne County Community College
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Moravian University
New Mexico Basic Needs Consortium
North Dakota Student Association
One Family
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Prairie State College
Resilient Students Network
Saint Paul College
Saturated In His Love Foundation
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Southern California College Attainment Network
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
Students United
Taft College Basic Needs
Tennessee Justice Center
The Campaign for College Opportunity
United Way of King County
United Way of New York State & 211 New York Inc.
University of California Student Association
University of Washington Food Pantry
URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America
Washington Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition
Washington Postsecondary Basic Needs Coalition
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
Washington Student Association (WSA)
Western Washington University-Basic Needs/Off-Campus Living