



Hunger-Free Campus Bill Talking Points + Questions/Answer

What is the Hunger-Free Campus, Bill?

The [Hunger-Free Campus Bill](#) sends funding to public colleges that address student hunger on campus. Any college is eligible to access these funds if they:

1. **Start a Swipe Out Hunger program on campus:** For campuses that have meal plans, colleges can implement a Swipe Out Hunger program, enabling students to donate their extra meals to their peers facing food insecurity on campus so more students can access a warm, nourishing meal at a dining hall (community colleges are exempt).
2. **Establish food pantries:** Colleges can use this funding to create an on-campus pantry or partner with a local food bank so students can regularly access food.
3. **Create SNAP Enrollment Opportunities:** Campuses can designate a person to ensure students have access to accurate information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including how to apply.

Who wrote the Hunger-Free Campus Bill?

Swipe Out Hunger is the original architect of this bill, originally introduced in California in 2017 by then Assemblywoman Monique Limón. Each state has had advocates adopt and amend the bill to their state's specific needs.

How many states have passed the Hunger-Free Campus Bill?

Three states have formally passed the Hunger-Free Campus Bill: California in 2017, New Jersey in 2019, and Maryland in 2021.

Seven other states have introduced the bill, including Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Washington, Illinois, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and New York.

How much money has been distributed through the Hunger-Free Campus Bill?

To date, more than \$55 million has been distributed to schools across California and New Jersey.

How have colleges used this funding to date?

In California, this legislation has supported more than 2.7 million students. A few examples of how California State University (CSU) colleges have used this funding is below:

- **Staffed Basic Needs Positions:** CSU Monterey Bay hired two student assistants to support campus basic needs initiatives.

- **Trained Student Wellness Advocates:** CSU LA trained faculty, staff, and student leaders in basic needs best practices.
- **Strengthened Communication Outreach:** CSU Monterey Bay launched a text message app, alerting students of leftover food at campus events.
- **Upgraded Existing Basic Needs Resources:** CSU Fresno renovated their student cupboard with new SNAP stations and storage/refrigeration.
- **Expanded Universities' SNAP Outreach and Enrollment:** CSU LA has assisted 1,000 students with SNAP pre-screenings, applications, and reporting in the last school year.
- **Developed Creative Corporate & Community Partnerships:** CSU Monterey Bay collaborated with Starbucks to receive donated grab-and-go food and local farmers' markets to purchase vouchers for produce.

As CSU Fresno's Food Security Project Coordinator said, "This bill allowed campuses to get started and show the impact this type of funding makes on student success. We are so thankful for the funding to be able to support our students with basic needs so that they can be successful inside and out of the classroom."

Is college student hunger a thing?

At first glance, a college campus might look like a place of equal opportunity: communal dorms, shared dining halls, similar course loads-- and often, access to basic needs is put on the back burner once a college freshman arrives on campus. The reality for many is the very critical elements of a college student's experience, including a student's ability to focus in class or feel part of the campus community, are threatened by food insecurity.

One in three college students faces food insecurity nationally and as. As students from diverse backgrounds are entering college with hopes of creating a better future, many are struggling to support themselves and finish their degrees. While additional forms of assistance like local food pantries and SNAP exist, many students don't know how to access these resources. Even if they do, there is a stigma that current students feel embarrassed to take advantage of these services.

With the pandemic, we know these issues were only exacerbated. In a national [survey](#) conducted by Chegg, Swipe Out Hunger, and Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation, it was reported that:

- Nearly one-third (29%) of college students have missed a meal at least once a week since the beginning of the pandemic.
- More than half of all students (52%) sometimes use off-campus food banks – and 30% use them once a month or more.
- 49% of student parents have experienced food insecurity.
- 34% of students say they know someone who has dropped out of college due to difficulties affording food.

But the United States of America is the world's wealthiest country-- how is it possible that we have students who experience food insecurity?

Costly housing, transportation, textbook, health care, and other living expenses coupled with the rising cost of tuition have created great financial obstacles for college students, particularly those

from non-traditional backgrounds, which our country has seen an exciting boom in enrollment. The students facing the greatest hardships are those from low-income backgrounds, those who are undocumented, those who have children, first-generation college students, and former foster youth. Financial aid programs and scholarships designed for low-income students fail to cover the bulk of their needs and working while in school does not eliminate the threat of food insecurity.

That said, we know that food insecurity affects more than just these populations, including athletes and honor students. There are many [intersecting contextual factors](#) of student food insecurity, illustrating that food insecurity evolves, rather than remains at a stagnant state.

Why do we require schools to become Hunger-Free Campus before receiving funding?

The pathway to sustainable college food security programs requires a commitment from each campus. Through the Hunger-Free Campus Bill, campuses are incentivized to demonstrate their investment before the state, so that its taxpayers support these efforts.

Not only does this create a more sustainable funding source, but it also ensures that our dollars are safeguarded by each campus' dedication to these programs.

Does the Hunger-Free Campus Bill create additional burdens on the college? Why or why not?

This bill is not a requirement. Any campus can choose to become eligible for the incentive funding to bolster their anti-hunger programs. Built into the Hunger Free Campus Bill is the flexibility for schools with few resources (such as community colleges) to qualify for programmatic funding and receive the designation without large investments.

How is the funding dispersed and who makes that decision?

The Department of Education distributes Hunger-Free Campus Bill funding to the chancellor's office for each respective system. Each campus system then decides how to allocate funds to their campuses: some systems have simply given dollars directly to campuses while others ask campuses to submit funding proposals.

How do we make sure the funding directly benefits students?

In every Hunger Free Campus Bill, four-year universities are required to assemble a task force to support student food security programs. These task forces can be instrumental in holding colleges accountable to their students, ensuring the money reaches students most beneficially. We also strongly encourage transparency as offices report back on how this funding was leveraged for students, ensuring colleges are responsibly using the money.

Aren't community colleges at a disadvantage?

Not necessarily: while community colleges may be exempt from starting a Swipe Out Hunger program on campus as many of them do not have campus meal plans, they can still leverage this funding in meaningful ways.

In the 2018 - 2019 academic year in California, more than \$10 million was distributed across 114 California's community colleges to assist students with food pantry access, food distribution, as well as CalFresh (SNAP) applications. Access to these types of resources can significantly impact students.

How do we make sure that community colleges and smaller schools can access these funds?

Community colleges are exempt from many of the requirements of the bill that are not feasible to their campus community. Additionally, we encourage the university and college systems to prioritize funds to campuses that serve students from marginalized communities, oftentimes those who attend community colleges.

What could be achieved through funding, especially if we cannot afford to allocate millions at this time?

We would always love to see more funding allocated, but these dedicated dollars can lay the groundwork for campus food security programs. A few examples of how public colleges can leverage funding in low-cost but impactful ways include:

- Host SNAP enrollment/outreach events
- Establish/grow food pantries
- Pay for student leader stipends
- Provide student/staff basic needs training
- Provide grocery gift cards to students in need
- Create resources to connect students to on and off-campus resources

Why is SNAP outreach a requirement?

SNAP—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is the federal nutrition program that forms the first line of defense against Hunger in the U.S.-- but many college students don't know about this benefit. And if they do, students have reported immense barriers to entry.

Colleges can play a significant role in helping their students access this benefit by understanding their state-specific eligibility criteria, the application process, and reporting requirements-- demystifying an otherwise draconian process.

What is a "task force" and how is it helpful to address hunger on campus?

Task forces allow campuses to invite diverse stakeholders with the goal of amplifying reach and impact. By assembling a task force with Dining Services, the Dean of Student life, student leaders, and campus social workers/case managers, this group brings together a wealth of resources and wisdom from a wide array of stakeholders.

Can funding be increased in future years?

Yes, in California, the Hunger-Free Campus Bill has increased funding every year since its passage. It initially started with an investment of \$7.5 million statewide in 2017, but is currently

on track to provide \$64 million in just the last two fiscal years combined. New Jersey will also increase its investment in the program this fiscal year with \$1 million allocated. Other states such as Minnesota have also introduced legislation to increase the grant program's allocation after its initial passage.