

## Enhance Access to SNAP (EATS) Act of 2023

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

The Enhance Access to SNAP Act of 2023, or EATS Act of 2023, would permanently remove barriers and expand access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for students enrolled in college half-time or more. To make matters more complicated, the Food and Nutrition Act has additional provisions that can disqualify any individual living on campus at an institution of higher education from accessing SNAP, purely because they are residing in that institution.

Disqualifying higher education students and predicating exemptions on burdensome “work for food” rules unfairly restricts access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and impedes student learning, health, and stability. Under the *EATS Act of 2023*, the arbitrary disqualification (and all references to the provision) will be entirely repealed and an exception from the institutions disqualification will be made for any bona-fide student.

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.
- 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.
- 65% of students who identify as LGBTQ experienced basic needs insecurity
- 45% of students reported recent struggles to afford or access food before COVID-19.

**While temporary statutory authority created public health emergency exemptions to the general SNAP college student eligibility provisions, which have eased student work requirements during the COVID-19 public health emergency, these exemptions will sadly end 30 days after the expiration of the Public Health emergency (May 11<sup>th</sup>), on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023.** That is why it is so vital that as we begin our work on the 2023 Farm Bill, we ensure that higher education students, who have had additional flexibility and access to SNAP over the past few years, are not returned to an arbitrary ban on SNAP access, and forced to “work for food” on top of their college enrollment.

No student should have to choose between food and education. Please join us in permanently removing harmful and burdensome “work-for-food” requirements by passing the EATS Act.