

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
2368-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we request that you include at least \$45 million in funding for the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program (“Basic Needs Grants”) within the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

Basic Needs Grants leverage Federal, State, local, and institutional resources to improve students’ access to food, housing, child care, physical and mental health, technology, and transportation. Without the ability to afford these necessities, students in higher education are all too often thrown off track from graduating.

Last year, the first-ever nationally representative data on student basic needs was released from the National Center for Education Sciences, which indicated that nearly one in four (23%) of undergraduate students across the country experience food insecurity—a rate twice that of all other U.S. households. The data translates to more than 4.3 million undergraduate and graduate students who have low or very low food security. Research from The Hope Center at Temple University also shows that rates of basic needs insecurity are much higher for historically marginalized students, including Black, Latino, and Indigenous students; parenting students; LGBTQIA+ students; first-generation students; Pell Grant recipients; former foster youth; and justice-involved students. Students at community colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) also experience higher levels of basic needs insecurity.

Basic Needs Grants were first funded in FY21, and in FY23 110 applications were eligible for review; however, only 14 applicants were funded due to budgetary constraints. Since the program’s onset, the total number of students served by the 31 active grantees is 50,401. In FY23, 11 new awards were made from remaining applicants from the FY22 cycle, and only 10 additional awards are anticipated in FY24 if funding remains at current levels.

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Basic Needs Grants to colleges and universities in both rural and urban areas in states and territories such as California, Ohio, Virginia, Nevada, New Jersey, Minnesota, Texas, Wisconsin, Oregon, Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Kansas, North Carolina, New Mexico, New York, Puerto Rico, and Tennessee—and has received applications from many more. With continued support for Basic Needs Grants, more students will have access to the resources they need to succeed, regardless of where they live or pursue their education.

Reflecting the substantial demand and the range of areas institutions can use these funds for, we ask the Committee to increase support for this program to \$45 million, the same level as two other FIPSE programs in FY23. We also ask that the awards continue to be prioritized for institutions that serve a significant percentage of Pell-eligible students, including community colleges, HBCUs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and other Minority-Serving Institutions. Increased funding will allow more colleges and

universities across the country to fund comprehensive support for students while building a set of models and promising practices that other institutions across the nation can replicate.

In addition to expanded funding, we encourage you to again include report language that focuses the program on systemic approaches to addressing basic needs insecurity, including assessing student needs through regular surveys and data collection, connecting students to public and tax benefits, and centralizing support through basic needs centers or hubs. These proven strategies help colleges leverage other public and private resources to address the immense scale of the need at their institutions. With that said, we ask the Committee to include the following report language:

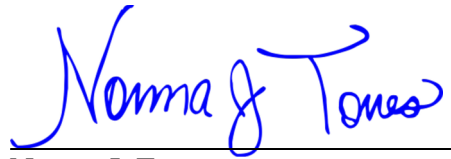
Basic Needs Grants.—The Committee recognizes that many students in higher education are unable to achieve academic success because they cannot afford to meet their basic needs, such as housing, food, hygiene, technology, transportation, and access to physical and mental health services. The Committee includes \$45,000,000 for competitive grants to institutions of higher education, as defined in section 101 of the HEA, or consortia or systems of such institutions, to advance systemic or holistic solutions to student basic needs insecurity. Such grants shall include one or more of the following activities: establishing processes to automatically identify and conduct outreach to students who may be eligible for public and tax benefit programs; conducting surveys or assessments of student basic needs security, including surveys of student needs to be conducted upon enrollment; or providing referrals or case management to students to enroll in local, State, and Federal public and tax benefit programs. Activities may also include coordinating and collaborating with government and community-based organizations to execute these grant activities and provide direct services such as temporary housing, secure sleeping arrangements, free or subsidized food, or access to on-campus childcare. At least 25 percent of grants must go to community colleges and at least 25 percent must go to four-year HBCUs, HSIs, and other MSIs. The Department shall prioritize grants to eligible entities serving a significant number of underserved students, including students with low incomes as measured using multiple indicators of student financial need.

The evidence is clear that addressing student basic needs through a multi-pronged approach can benefit students and reduce administrative burdens. That is why we were also pleased to see that the President's budget for FY25 includes a new Comprehensive Postsecondary Student Supports Program which proposes to build and expand on the Basic Needs Grant program. This new proposed grant would include similar comprehensive basic needs strategies, but would also fund college mental health services and treatment.

Basic Needs Grants prevent students from sacrificing their health and well-being to succeed in higher education. Addressing the crisis of student basic needs insecurity is essential for helping students access and afford higher education.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



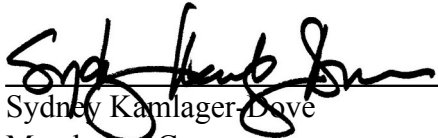
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



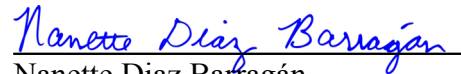
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



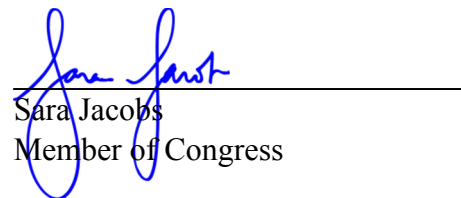
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



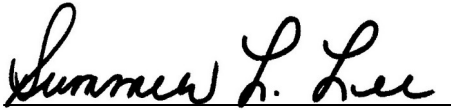
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



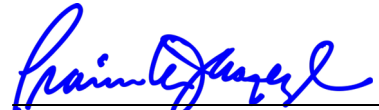
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
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Summer Lee
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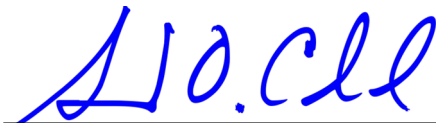
Pramila Jayapal
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MARK TAKANO
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Katie Porter
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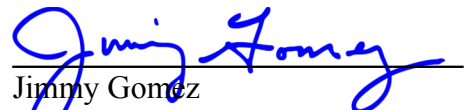
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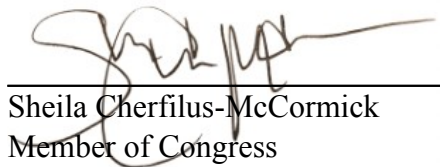
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Shontel M. Brown
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