

# Basic Assistance for Students In College (BASIC) Act

## Congresswoman Norma Torres

The BASIC Act would help institutions of higher education address the unmet basic needs of their students by establishing a \$500 million competitive grant program for institutions and requiring data sharing between federal departments that administer public assistance programs. Specifically, the bill:

- **Basic Needs Grant Program:** Establishes a \$500 million competitive grant program to help institutions of higher education identify and meet the basic needs of students, including food, housing, transportation, child care, health care, and technology.
  - Planning Grants (\$40 million): Authorizes 1-year planning grants of up to \$50,000 for institutions of higher education to conduct basic needs research and develop a plan to address unmet basic needs at the institution. Grantees must use funds to:
    - Establish a basic needs steering committee comprised of relevant on- and off-campus stakeholders;
    - Conduct research to better understand the level of unmet basic needs at the institution, availability of existing resources, and opportunities for coordination and collaboration with outside stakeholders; and
    - Create a campus-wide basic needs strategy.
  - Implementation Grants (\$460 million): Authorizes 5-year implementation grants of up to \$500,000 for institutions of higher education to develop a basic needs infrastructure, based on a previously awarded planning grant or a plan approved by the Secretary. Grantees must use funds to carry out at least two of the following activities to meet basic needs:
    - Provide free or subsidized food, secure sleeping arrangements, temporary housing, priority access to existing on campus child care, and other basic needs to eligible students;
    - Conduct outreach to students to encourage participation in basic needs programs and services;
    - Help eligible students apply for and enroll in local, state, and federal public assistance programs;
    - Coordinate and collaborate with government and/or community-based organizations;
    - Purchase materials, equipment, transportation, and facilities;
    - Hire personnel to facilitate implementation; or
    - Other matters determined by the Secretary.
  - At least 25% of planning and implementation grants must go to community colleges. Grant priority will also go to institutions with 25% or higher Pell enrollment, HBCUs, and other MSIs
- **Data Sharing Agreement:** Requires the Department of Education to coordinate with the Departments of Agriculture, Housing & Urban Development, and Health & Human Services to develop and implement an agreement to:
  - Securely share data to identify current students who may be eligible for federal means-tested programs, including SNAP, SSI, TANF, WIC, Medicaid, and federal housing assistance; and
  - Coordinate efforts to help institutions of higher education enroll eligible students in these programs.