

2023 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL FARM BILL PRIORITIES

Community colleges are vital institutions in their communities: providing affordable higher education, workforce training that responds to local industry, and serving as community anchors and economic engines, including in rural communities.

Community colleges serve nearly 4 in 10 undergraduate students. Those students are more likely to be independent – over age 24, parenting, or veterans – and more likely to be low-income than their counterparts at four-year institutions. As part of the mission to provide affordable education and training opportunities, community colleges keep tuition rates low (the average rate is \$3,860). However, students face enormous non-tuition costs that serve as barriers to success and many community colleges face resource constraints that limit the growth of innovative, industry-demanded programs.

Community colleges have a strong interest in the 2023 Farm Bill and have identified opportunities to better support students and key programs.

Increase Access to SNAP for College Students

A 2018 Government Accountability Office report found that over half of college students estimated to be eligible were not participating in the SNAP program, even as reported rates of food insecurity among students continue to climb. Existing requirements for students are complicated and were based on a student who attends full-time and lives on campus.

To support the food access and nutrition of community college students, whose average age is 27 and who predominantly do not live on campus, the SNAP program should be amended in the following ways:

- **Examine the Student Work Requirement:** Add postsecondary education to the list of activities that can fulfill the employment and training requirement in SNAP. Alternatively, decrease the work requirement for enrolled students.
- **Simplify Student Access:** Revisit the existing student exemption requirements to reduce complexity and increase uptake for eligible students, including by expanding simplified eligibility requirements for certain student populations.

Support Program Completion for SNAP E&T Students

Community colleges are increasingly supporting their communities by serving as third-party providers for SNAP Employment & Training. Two changes that would support students, as well as program administration, are:

- **Income Disregard:** Exclude earnings from work-based learning programs, such as subsidized employment and apprenticeships, for participants in SNAP E&T. This change will support program completion by preventing students from losing their SNAP access mid-program.
- **SNAP E&T grant (100%) funds:** Increase the funds that states and their employment and training partners use to launch and scale SNAP E&T Services. These funds do not require reimbursement and therefore are crucial to establishing and growing new programs.

Support for Rural Community Colleges

Community colleges across the country play a growing role in building the advanced agriculture and renewable resources workforce, especially in rural communities. To maintain and expand these critical programs, community colleges support the “Community College Agriculture Advancement Act of 2023” to authorize new capacity-building grants.

This program would authorize USDA to provide assistance to two-year colleges, and to encourage collaboration between community and technical colleges and other higher education institutions. An annual authorization of \$20 million is proposed. This Farm Bill proposal (H.R. 3425/S. 1740) will assure a pipeline of USDA employees and agricultural workers, a reliable supply of healthy foods, and the promotion of sustainable farming methods.

For more information, contact David Baime (dbaime@acc.nche.edu) and Carrie Warick-Smith (cwsmith@acct.org).