



## **Community College Position on The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024**

The Farm bill reauthorization presents a key opportunity for the Agriculture Committee to support community colleges and their students. On behalf of the nation's 1,026 community colleges and their more than 10 million students, the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees outline below their position on The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024.

Community colleges are vital institutions in their communities. They provide affordable higher education, workforce training that responds to local industry, and serve as community anchors and economic engines, including in rural communities. Community colleges serve nearly 4 in 10 undergraduate students, who are more likely to be over age 24, parenting, or veterans, than students in other sectors. While our institutions aim to keep college affordable, with average tuition and required fees of \$3,990 (Fall, 2023) students face enormous non-tuition costs. And many community colleges face resource constraints that limit the growth of innovative, industry-demanded programs.

Community colleges' strong interest in the Farm Bill is specifically related to access to SNAP for students, completion efforts within the SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) program, and the ability of rural community colleges to receive much needed capacity building support.

The draft legislation includes the following items that greatly impact our institutions and students:

- A directive to establish outreach to college students qualifying for SNAP benefits,
- A directive for "income disregard" for SNAP E&T students who are earning as part of their program requirements, and
- The new program Grants for Community College Agriculture and National Resources Programs.

Unfortunately, provisions to simplify access to SNAP for qualifying college students were not included in the draft. Additionally, changes to SNAP to grant eligibility to students who would otherwise be eligible if they weren't pursuing postsecondary education are also absent. Nearly 1 in 4 community college students are parents, almost half are financially independent, 64% are working, 6% are military-connected, and 19% have a disability. SNAP is intended to serve these segments of the population - individuals working toward economic security for themselves and their families. Ensuring that hungry college students have access to SNAP will pay off in the long run. It will help these students complete their degree or credential rather than pausing in their studies, which would lead to income insecurity and the increased likelihood that they remain reliant on public benefits. As the committee moves forward with this work, we look forward to working with you to address student access to SNAP provisions.

AACC and ACCT encourage the Committee to adopt the full text of H.R. 3425. This legislation reflects the essential role that community colleges play in providing a broad base of educational and other support to the agricultural sector. We particularly support the provisions that allow colleges to use funds for capacity building. As the techniques and equipment needed for all aspects of food and national resource production continue to become more sophisticated, there is increased need for education and training that lead to the many middle skill jobs operating and maintaining this equipment. In order to serve students well, our institutions frequently need capacity building support to start and update these programs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to engage on this important legislation for students, colleges, and our country. To further discuss, please reach out to David Baime, Senior Vice President for Government Relations at AACC ([dbaime@aacc.nche.edu](mailto:dbaime@aacc.nche.edu)) or Carrie Warick-Smith, Vice President for Public Policy at ACCT ([cwsmith@acct.org](mailto:cwsmith@acct.org)).