



March 13, 2024

The Honorable Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
2107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Paul Utke, Republican Lead
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
2403 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund, Republican Lead Utke, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Students United, Hunger Solutions, Second Harvest Heartland, and the Partners to End Hunger coalition, we write today to support [SF4402](#).

What does SF4402 address?

Too many students across our state live with the daily burden of food insecurity and, as a result, suffer worse academic outcomes and struggle to complete their degrees. This crisis impacts over a quarter of students in Minnesota, and it's time to act.

Currently, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the federal program that provides food-purchasing assistance for Americans with low incomes, is a primary mechanism for addressing food insecurity. Unfortunately, it is exceedingly difficult for college students to access the benefits of SNAP.

In addition to meeting the usual SNAP eligibility requirements, college students must meet a specific student exemption.

How did we get here?

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, passed by Congress in 2021, introduced two temporary exemptions to expand postsecondary student access to SNAP during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Specifically, students with work-study and an expected family contribution of zero dollars on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) became eligible for SNAP



assistance. However, with the expiration of the public health emergency, the burdensome “work for food” requirements returned.

These requirements were especially devastating because we know that the temporary exemptions afforded students who desperately needed access to SNAP. In fact, according to a [report](#) from Minnesota’s Department of Human Services, SNAP served 37% more postsecondary students in November 2022 compared to December 2019. Moreover, food insecurity decreased among survey respondents from 73% to 32%.

How would SF4402 work?

Minnesota lawmakers can follow the example of states like Ohio, Arizona, and Oregon in addressing this issue at the state level. Specifically, SF4402 would clarify state law and allow students who are attending public colleges, universities, or Tribal colleges and who are eligible to receive the Pell Grant and otherwise SNAP eligible to qualify for SNAP benefits.

In every corner of our state, students struggle to afford basic necessities and fight the ache of hunger. Lawmakers can help these students by leveraging federal dollars and passing SF4402 at no cost to the state. We urge members to support Senator Putnam’s efforts.

