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November 17, 2025

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Su Jin Jez

Chair, Members, and Staff of the Assembly Committee on Higher Education
1020 N Street, Room 173
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Committee Hearing on Hunger in California: Impacts of Federal Actions on
CalFresh: Comments for the Record**

Dear Honorable Chair Fong and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issues being heard at your committee's November 17 hearing on The Impact of the Federal Government on the Future of Higher Education. We very much appreciate your committee's consideration of these critical issues, particularly how they impact California's low-income and parenting students.

[California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy](#) is committed to strengthening education-to-employment pathways and enabling all Californians to achieve their education and career goals. Public benefits programs, including financial aid, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CCAMPIS, child care, and others, are critical resources that support equitable completion of postsecondary degrees and credentials.

Like many other advocacy organizations, we have watched with alarm this year as actions taken at the federal level jeopardize the ability of all Californians, not just students, to support themselves and their families and achieve their educational and career goals. The federal H.R. 1, signed in July by President Trump, includes deep cuts and structural changes to several programs, one being the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the federal program through which CalFresh benefits are provided. **These changes are likely to harm students and low-income families nationwide, especially in states like California, where [50% of college students](#) experience food insecurity.**

Nearly [one in seven Californians](#) depends on CalFresh to help pay for food. This includes an estimated [414,000 students](#) across California's community colleges (CCC), California State Universities (CSUs), and the University of California system, though it is estimated that many more students are eligible for the program. Recent investments in basic needs centers and outreach led to increased uptake rates among students, with 14% of CCC students, 19% of CSU students, 21% of UC undergraduate students, and 12% of UC graduate students who participated in CalFresh at some point during Academic Year (AY) 2022-23. H.R. 1 threatens to roll back this progress, increase structural barriers, and reduce the flow of federal dollars into our local economies.

Potential Impacts of H.R. 1 on CalFresh Eligibility and Higher Education

- H.R. 1 [cuts nearly \\$300 billion](#) nationwide over the next decade with its sweeping program that will reduce benefits and tighten eligibility.
- H.R. 1 [shifts some SNAP costs to states](#), including a share of benefits costs for the first time in history. This could pressure California to scale back CalFresh outreach, reduce eligibility and/or benefits, and potentially reduce state budget support for other program areas, such as higher education.
- H.R. 1 **caps SNAP access at 3 months** total every three year period for people who do not work or participate in qualifying activities for 20 hours a week. California does not currently collect hours worked data or share that data in a way that would ease administrative burden of work verification.
- H.R. 1 **expands this work requirement to include people previously exempted**, including former foster youth, veterans, individuals who are homeless, adults without disabilities aged 55-64, and people with dependent children. Many of these Californians may qualify for additional months of food benefits if they can be identified as students eligible under student exemption rules.
- H.R. 1 **cuts will have a ripple effect on education budgets**, since historically constrained budgets have meant cuts to higher education since it accounts for [a large portion of discretionary spending](#), including the [UC and CSU systems](#).

Potential Impacts of H.R. 1 on Medicaid Eligibility and Higher Education

- H.R.1 **requires able-bodied adults ages 19-64 to complete 80 hours each month of “community engagement” to qualify for Medicaid**. The state should establish data-sharing and verification protocols to enroll the vast majority of eligible individuals automatically. This includes those who meet criteria based on hours of work, participation in a work program, community service, or enrollment in an education program, into Medi-Cal. California students should be automatically identified and flagged as eligible to prevent any discontinuation of health care access.

Additional Federal Changes and Their Consequences for Californians, Students, and Higher Education Institutions

- [5.5 million Californians](#) are directly affected by the suspension of SNAP benefits due to the government shutdown, including enrolled students.
- Rising child care costs, hidden tax penalties, and the expiration of key federal relief programs like the Student Loan Payment Pause will worsen fiscal strains on students and their families.
- Fewer child care slots will be available to student parents due to CCAMPIS program changes.
 - Between 2011 and 2023 California campuses received 424 awards totaling \$91 million. However, the current administration did not award any new CCAMPIS program child care funding in 2024 or 2025, and cut it from the 2026 budget.
 - The Department of Education abruptly [discontinued previously awarded funding](#) to several campuses, including UC San Diego and UCLA, because of language in their original grant applications that used Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion framing. This left many students without child care at the start of the semester.

- The recently [announced](#) discontinuation of funding to several higher education programs reduces campus student service support grants, including:
 - Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Grants (\$10m)
 - Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development Grant (\$45m)
 - Postsecondary Student Success Grants (\$45m)
 - Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success Grants (\$9m)
 - HBCU, TCU, and MSI Research & Development Infrastructure Grants (\$50m)
 - Transitioning Gang-Involved Youth to Higher Education Grants (\$5m)
 - Open Textbook Pilot Grants (\$7m)

How the Legislature Can Help

- **Advance administrative solutions that expand CalFresh access for college students.** For example, last year's SB 761 by Senator Ashby would have identified eligible students through the Cal Grant application, allowing them to opt in to share their contact information for direct outreach. Unfortunately, this legislation was vetoed by Governor Newsom, who noted that the language needed improvement to increase implementability.
- **Simplify student CalFresh eligibility rules in California.** Ensuring that all higher education programs offered in California are considered Local Programs that Improve Employability, meaning they lead to employment, enables students applying for CalFresh to prove their eligibility more easily.
- **Collect more frequent and better wage data** to help Californians subjected to work requirements qualify and stay enrolled in CalFresh and Medical, including hours worked and occupation. Since education programs and student exemptions count towards eligibility there should be clear information for these populations that guarantee their eligibility. The Employment Development Department's base wage file should be enhanced to allow for the collection and sharing of this information as recommended by SB 755 (2022). There are federal matching funds available for this purpose, and other states have used those to update their data systems.
- **Protect higher education funding from additional cuts** and support them in addressing student affordability, given the drastic federal funding cuts they already face.
- **Establish cross-sector initiatives to enroll low-income public benefits recipients without a college degree into financial aid** and other higher education and workforce training programs to help lift them out of poverty and qualify them for CalFresh and Medi-Cal through student exemptions.

H.R. 1 and other changes being put forth by federal leaders threaten to undermine students' food security, impede their academic progress, and increase costs/complexities for colleges and the state in supporting vulnerable student populations. State solutions like those noted above can help to fill this gap. We encourage the committee to continue these discussions and look forward to partnering with you in the coming session. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'su jin jez' in a cursive, lowercase style.

Su Jin Jez, PhD
CEO, California Competes:
Higher Education for a Strong Economy