

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4968

To provide for the basic needs of students at institutions of higher education.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 31, 2019

Mrs. TORRES of California (for herself, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. VARGAS, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. PANETTA, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. CISNEROS, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. CÁRDENAS, and Mr. TAKANO) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To provide for the basic needs of students at institutions
of higher education.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Basic Assistance for
5 Students In College Act” or the “BASIC Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DATA SHARING.**

7 Not more than 90 days after the date of enactment
8 of this Act, the Secretary of Education, in coordination
9 with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Hous-

1 ing and Urban Development, and the Secretary of Health
2 and Human Services, shall develop and implement an
3 agreement to—

4 (1) securely share data among the respective
5 Federal agencies of such Secretaries in order to
6 identify students who are enrolled at institutions of
7 higher education (as defined in section 102 of the
8 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002))
9 (including full-time and part-time students) who
10 may be eligible for benefits through—

11 (A) the supplemental nutrition assistance
12 program under the Food and Nutrition Act of
13 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.);

14 (B) the supplemental security income pro-
15 gram under title XVI of the Social Security Act
16 (42 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.);

17 (C) the program of block grants to States
18 for temporary assistance for needy families
19 under part A of title IV of the Social Security
20 Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);

21 (D) the special supplemental nutrition pro-
22 gram for women, infants, and children estab-
23 lished by section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act
24 of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786);

1 (E) the Medicaid program under title XIX
2 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et
3 seq.);

4 (F) Federal housing assistance programs,
5 including tenant-based assistance under section
6 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937
7 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)), and public housing, as
8 defined in section 3(b)(1) of such Act (42
9 U.S.C. 1437a(b)(1)); or

10 (G) any other means-tested Federal benefit
11 program as identified by the Secretary of Edu-
12 cation in accordance with section 479(d)(2)(F)
13 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
14 U.S.C. 1087ss(d)(2)(F)); and

15 (2) coordinate efforts to provide assistance to
16 institutions of higher education to facilitate the en-
17 rollment of eligible students in the programs listed
18 in paragraph (1).

19 **SEC. 3. GRANTS TO SUPPORT THE BASIC NEEDS OF STU-**
20 **DENTS.**

21 Title VIII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
22 U.S.C. 1161a) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
23 lowing:

**“PART BB—GRANTS TO SUPPORT THE BASIC
NEEDS OF STUDENTS**

“SEC. 899. GRANTS TO SUPPORT THE BASIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS.

“(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) BASIC NEEDS.—The term ‘basic needs’ means the needs of students that support their success while enrolled at an eligible institution, including needs such as—

“(A) food;

“(B) housing;

“(C) transportation;

“(D) child care;

“(E) health care; and

“(F) technology.

“(2) COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The term ‘community college’ means a public institution of higher education at which the highest degree that is predominantly awarded to students is an associate degree, including 2-year Tribal Colleges or Universities, as defined in section 316, and public 2-year State institutions of higher education.

“(3) ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.—The term ‘eligible institution’ means an institution of higher education (as defined in section 102) that participates in programs under title IV.

1 “(b) PLANNING GRANTS.—

2 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
3 planning grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible
4 institutions to enable the eligible institutions to con-
5 duct research and planning to reduce incidences of
6 student food and housing insecurity and to meet
7 other basic needs of students, by carrying out the
8 activities described in paragraph (2).

9 “(2) ACTIVITIES.—An eligible institution receiv-
10 ing a grant under this subsection shall use grant
11 funds to carry out the following:

12 “(A) Establish a basic needs steering com-
13 mittee that will be responsible for creating and
14 approving the basic needs strategy described in
15 subparagraph (C), and that will be comprised of
16 relevant campus stakeholders, such as—

17 “(i) students who have experienced
18 challenges in meeting basic needs;

19 “(ii) student government representa-
20 tives;

21 “(iii) institutional staff representing
22 the areas of student financial aid, housing,
23 dining, student affairs, accessibility serv-
24 ices, and health services (including coun-
25 seling or psychological services);

1 “(iv) faculty;

2 “(v) relevant administrators, including
3 local human services administrators; and

4 “(vi) community-based organizations.

5 “(B) Conduct research regarding—

6 “(i) the level of unmet basic needs at
7 the institution, disaggregated by race and
8 ethnicity, income quintile, status as a first-
9 generation college student (as defined in
10 section 402A(h)), Federal Pell Grant eligi-
11 bility status, disability status, status as a
12 student parent, sex (including sexual ori-
13 entation and gender identity), or other
14 subgroup as determined by the institution;

15 “(ii) the presence of institutional bar-
16 riers (such as award displacement) and
17 current institutional interventions to ad-
18 dress such barriers;

19 “(iii) the resources available to ad-
20 dress basic needs of students, both on cam-
21 pus and off campus; and

22 “(iv) opportunities for coordination
23 and collaboration between the institution
24 and government or community-based orga-
25 nizations, such as—

1 “(I) the local office that admin-
2 isters benefits through the supple-
3 mental nutrition assistance program
4 (SNAP) and SNAP employment and
5 training programs under the Food
6 and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C.
7 2011 et seq.) or the temporary assist-
8 ance for needy families program
9 (TANF) and subsidized programs
10 that meet the work requirements
11 under part A of title IV of the Social
12 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);

13 “(II) organizations that partici-
14 pate in the Federal work-study pro-
15 gram under part C of title IV of the
16 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
17 U.S.C. 1087–51 et seq.); or

18 “(III) low-income housing assist-
19 ance organizations, including those as-
20 sisting with tenant-based assistance
21 under section 8(o) of the United
22 States Housing Act of 1937 (42
23 U.S.C. 1437f(o)), and public housing,
24 as defined in section 3(b)(1) of such
25 Act (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)(1)).

1 “(C) Create a basic needs strategy that de-
2 scribes how the institution will—

3 “(i) seek to address or meet the basic
4 needs of students through on-campus and
5 off-campus providers; and

6 “(ii) incorporate the research con-
7 ducted under subparagraph (B), including
8 with respect to the subgroups identified
9 under clause (i) of subparagraph (B), into
10 the basic needs strategy.

11 “(3) GRANT AMOUNTS; DURATION.—

12 “(A) AMOUNT.—A grant under this sub-
13 section shall be in an amount not to exceed
14 \$50,000.

15 “(B) DURATION.—A grant under this sub-
16 section shall be for a period of 1 year.

17 “(4) REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after
18 the end of the planning grant period under this sub-
19 section, each eligible institution that receives such a
20 grant shall submit a report to the Secretary describ-
21 ing the outcomes of the planning grant, regardless
22 of whether the eligible institution intends to apply
23 for an implementation grant.

24 “(c) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—

25 “(1) IN GENERAL.—

1 “(A) AUTHORIZATION OF AWARD.—The
2 Secretary shall award implementation grants,
3 on a competitive basis, to eligible institutions to
4 enable the eligible institutions to develop infra-
5 structure to meet the basic needs of students,
6 by implementing a basic needs strategy devel-
7 oped through a grant award under subsection
8 (b) or another existing basic needs plan ap-
9 proved by the Secretary, and carrying out the
10 activities described in paragraph (2).

11 “(B) ONGOING EXTERNAL FUNDING.—In
12 order to be eligible to receive an implementation
13 grant under this subsection, an eligible institu-
14 tion shall identify, in the application for such
15 grant, an ongoing non-Federal funding mecha-
16 nism to support the activities carried out with
17 grant funds after the grant period has expired.

18 “(2) ACTIVITIES.—An eligible institution receiv-
19 ing a grant under this subsection shall use the grant
20 funds to carry out at least two of the following:

21 “(A) Providing free or subsidized food, se-
22 cure sleeping arrangements, temporary housing,
23 priority access to existing on-campus child care,
24 and other basic needs to eligible students.

1 “(B) Conducting outreach to students to
2 encourage students to participate in programs
3 and receive services (including programs and
4 services provided through grant funding) to
5 meet basic needs.

6 “(C) Educating students about public as-
7 sistance programs (including State and local
8 public assistance programs, and the supple-
9 mental nutrition assistance program under the
10 Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C.
11 2011 et seq.), Federal housing assistance pro-
12 grams, and other income-based Federal assist-
13 ance programs), supporting students’ applica-
14 tions for those programs, and providing case
15 management and training for students to maxi-
16 mize the public assistance that students receive
17 to meet basic needs.

18 “(D) Coordination and collaboration be-
19 tween the eligible institution and government or
20 community-based organizations, such as the
21 local office that administers benefits through
22 the supplemental nutrition assistance program
23 under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7
24 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) or a low-income housing
25 assistance organization.

1 “(E) Purchasing materials, equipment,
2 transportation, or facilities to reduce incidences
3 of food and housing insecurity and address the
4 basic needs of students at the eligible institu-
5 tion.

6 “(F) Hiring personnel to build basic needs
7 infrastructure and implement programming to
8 meet the basic needs of students at the eligible
9 institution.

10 “(G) Other matters determined appro-
11 priate by the Secretary.

12 “(3) GRANT AMOUNTS; DURATION.—

13 “(A) AMOUNT.—A grant under this sub-
14 section shall be in an amount not to exceed
15 \$500,000 total for each 5-year period.

16 “(B) DURATION.—A grant under this sub-
17 section shall be for a period of 5 years.

18 “(4) REPORT.—The Secretary shall prepare
19 and submit to Congress a report that describes—

20 “(A) the impact of the grant under this
21 subsection on eligible students;

22 “(B) best practices for the provision of
23 basic services to eligible students;

24 “(C) the obstacles faced by grant recipi-
25 ents; and

1 “(D) State or Federal policy barriers to
2 meeting the basic needs of students at institu-
3 tions of higher education.

4 “(5) BEST PRACTICES.—The Secretary shall
5 disseminate to eligible institutions information about
6 best practices, as described in paragraph (4)(B).

7 “(d) RESERVATION; PRIORITY; EQUITABLE DIS-
8 TRIBUTION.—

9 “(1) RESERVATION.—In awarding grants under
10 subsections (b) and (c), the Secretary shall reserve
11 an amount equal to not less than 25 percent of the
12 total amount available for grants under those sub-
13 sections for grant awards to community colleges.

14 “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under
15 subsections (b) and (c), the Secretary shall give pri-
16 ority to the following:

17 “(A) Eligible institutions with respect to
18 which not less than 25 percent of enrolled stu-
19 dents are students that are eligible to receive a
20 Federal Pell Grant under subpart 1 of part A
21 of title IV.

22 “(B) Eligible institutions that are histori-
23 cally Black colleges and universities.

24 “(C) Eligible institutions that are de-
25 scribed in section 371(a).

1 “(3) EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.—In awarding
2 grants under subsections (b) and (c), the Secretary
3 shall ensure an equitable distribution of grant
4 awards to eligible institutions in States based on
5 State population.

6 “(e) LIMITATION.—An eligible institution receiving a
7 grant under—

8 “(1) subsection (b) shall not use more than 50
9 percent of grant funds for personnel expenses; and

10 “(2) subsection (c) shall not use more than 75
11 percent of grant funds for personnel expenses.

12 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
13 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
14 \$500,000,000 for fiscal years 2021 through 2027, of
15 which—

16 “(1) \$40,000,000 are authorized to be appro-
17 priated to carry out planning grants under sub-
18 section (b); and

19 “(2) \$460,000,000 are authorized to be appro-
20 priated to carry out implementation grants under
21 subsection (c).”.

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