

Examining food insecurity

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A handful of Democratic senators want the [Government Accountability Office](#) (GAO) to conduct a study on food insecurity at U.S. colleges and universities.

“Sacrificing food for education can undermine a student’s educational goals and create barriers on their path to obtaining a certificate, degree, or credential,” the senators wrote in their [letter to GAO](#). “This situation raises concern and deserves greater scrutiny.”

The senators include: Elizabeth Warren (Massachusetts); Edward J. Markey (Massachusetts); ranking member of the [Health, Education, Labor and Pensions \(HELP\) Committee](#) Patty Murray (Washington); and ranking member of the [Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee](#) Debbie Stabenow (Michigan).

[Many students face food, housing insecurities](#)

The senators cited recent anecdotal studies indicating that a large number of college students experience food insecurity — including roughly half of community college students — and note that many higher education institutions run programs to help prevent their students from going hungry.

In Massachusetts, 13 community colleges, several state colleges, and multiple University of Massachusetts campuses operate food pantries on campus or have formal partnerships with local food pantries to help feed students affected by campus hunger.

“The prevalence of food insecurity on our campus, and on campuses across the state, is a huge concern. For some of our students, it is a daily struggle to decide whether to spend their last dollars on food or on the subway to get to class,” said Pam Eddinger, president of [Bunker Hill Community College](#), which hosts a mobile food pantry every month. “We need to do more to ensure that our students’ basic needs are met so that they can focus on completing their degrees and working towards a better future.”

The letter asks GAO to examine:

- the extent of food insecurity at U.S. colleges and universities
- barriers to addressing food insecurity among college students
- existing local, state and federal programs to help low-income college students experiencing food insecurity, their effectiveness and potential improvements to these programs
- examples of the best practices and strategies to address the problem

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