

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4968

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

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## 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

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## 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:

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

3       **“SEC. 899. GRANTS TO SUPPORT THE BASIC NEEDS OF STU-**  
4                                   **DENTS.**

5           “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6                   “(1) BASIC NEEDS.—The term ‘basic needs’  
7                   means the needs of students that support their suc-  
8                   cess while enrolled at an eligible institution, includ-  
9                   ing needs such as—

10                           “(A) food;

11                           “(B) housing;

12                           “(C) transportation;

13                           “(D) child care;

14                           “(E) health care; and

15                           “(F) technology.

16                   “(2) COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The term ‘com-  
17                   munity college’ means a public institution of higher  
18                   education at which the highest degree that is pre-  
19                   dominantly awarded to students is an associate de-  
20                   gree, including 2-year Tribal Colleges or Univer-  
21                   sities, as defined in section 316, and public 2-year  
22                   State institutions of higher education.

23                   “(3) ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.—The term ‘eligi-  
24                   ble institution’ means an institution of higher edu-  
25                   cation (as defined in section 102) that participates  
26                   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).”.

○