



May 30, 2025

The Honorable Mike McGuire
President Pro Tempore
California State Senate

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Senate Budget Committee Chair
California State Senate

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker
California State Assembly

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Assembly Budget Committee Chair
California State Assembly

Dear California State Legislative Budget Leaders:

On behalf of the University of California Student Association (UCSA), California State Student Association (CSSA), and Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC), we write to urge the Legislature to allocate at least \$60M for CalFoods in the 2025–26 Joint Legislative Budget. This would represent a \$52M increase above the Governor’s May Revision proposal of \$8M. This essential investment will protect and expand food access for students across all three public higher education segments, many of whom face alarming rates of food insecurity.

Over 1.3 million college students in California experience food insecurity. Research consistently confirms that basic needs insecurity significantly undermines academic performance, retention, and graduation rates. The Community College League of California reports that students facing food insecurity are 20–25% more likely to receive non-passing grades than their peers. UC system data further shows that food-insecure students are more likely to struggle with first-year retention, lower GPAs, and reduced degree completion rates.

Campus food pantries are a critical frontline resource in fighting student hunger. Today, California’s 148 campus food distribution sites serve over 145,000 unique students annually—yet this only reaches an estimated 11% of food-insecure students. These programs overwhelmingly depend on support from county food banks, which rely on CalFoods funding to supply affordable, nutritious food. Without CalFoods support, campuses would be forced to purchase food at retail prices, slashing their purchasing power and severely limiting the number of students they can serve.

The need for these services is growing rapidly. Demand for on-campus pantries has surged in recent years due to rising living costs and other cost burdens. As food insecurity worsens, students increasingly turn to their campus pantries—not only for immediate relief, but also to

connect with public benefits and longer-term support systems. This dual role has been recognized in the new California Master Plan for Career Education, which highlights basic needs support, including food assistance, as fundamental to student success.

The evidence is also clear: food support improves student health and academic outcomes. A 2022 UCSF-led study found that more frequent campus pantry visits were linked to better mental health, improved sleep, and enhanced overall well-being—key factors in a student's ability to thrive and complete their education.

California's future depends on a well-educated, healthy, and supported student population. The recent passage of AB 2033, which mandates basic needs services across all public colleges, reflects our collective commitment to that future. However, the effectiveness of this mandate hinges on adequate funding. By fully investing in CalFoods, the Legislature will not only fight hunger—it will directly improve academic outcomes and ensure equitable access to education across every corner of our state.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to support our students by including at least \$60 million in the final budget for CalFoods.

Sincerely,



Aditi Hariharan

President, University of California Student Association (UCSA)



Iese Esera

President, California State Student Association (CSSA)



Ivan Hernandez

President, Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC)

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