

End Hunger and Housing Insecurity on College Campuses in Washington State

Pass HB 1559 / SB 5566 to invest in postsecondary students' academic success.

Food & housing insecurity all too familiar for today's college student.

Postsecondary students' success requires support beyond tuition and academic needs. Recent research by the Washington Student Achievement Council found **1 in 2 students at 2- and 4-year colleges and universities report not having enough to eat and/or a safe place to live.** Many also lack access to other basic needs, such as health care, mental health services, childcare, transportation, and more.(1)



1 in 2 WA COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE FOOD AND/OR HOUSING INSECURITY

"Growing up, I experienced regular food insecurity...an issue that followed me [to college]. Unable to provide myself with nutritional food...not only was my body undernourished by the stress that came from my diminishing health, the inability to fix my situation created a decline in my academic performance."

- STUDENT

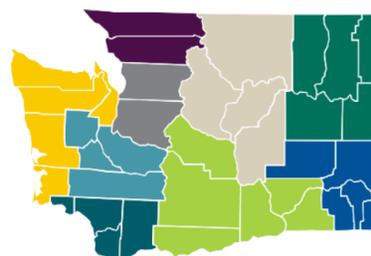
"The year I enrolled, I was put into a tight spot with housing. I tried to work full time and go to school full time, but that didn't end up panning out. It's only because of the housing navigator and the college's connection to shared housing services that I was able to [find housing] and continue my education."

- STUDENT

Inequitable access to basic needs at college.

As students on college campuses across the state struggle to have their basic needs met (Figure 1), **food and housing insecurity impact postsecondary students of color and those with low incomes at disproportionately higher rates:(2)**

- American Indian/Alaska Native and Black students experience food & housing insecurity at 67.8% and 66.8%, respectively.(3)
- Students who identify as former foster youth, living with a disability, a parent or guardian, or LGBTQI+ experience higher rates of homelessness and food & housing insecurity.(4)



South Central	57.9%	Southeast	48.8%
South Puget Sound	54.1%	Southwest	48.0%
Northeast	53.8%	North Central	47.9%
Northwest	50.1%	North Puget Sound	45.0%
Peninsula/Coastal	48.8%		

Figure 1: Food & Housing Insecurity Rates by Region
Source: Washington Student Achievement Council

Despite the significant need, less than half of students experiencing food & housing insecurity report accessing available support resources.

While basic needs benefits are available on- and off-campus, the process to seek out benefits, understand eligibility requirements, and complete countless applications falls on the shoulders of busy students. Navigating this complex process can interfere with their ability to concentrate on coursework, and in the long run, their likelihood of graduating and earning a living.

Providing navigation services for basic needs improves retention and attainment.

Benefit navigation services can help fill the access gap by assisting students in accessing basic needs benefits through a one-stop location & trusted, dedicated resource navigator. In a recent United Way of King County pilot initiative - Bridge to Finish - students who received support services from navigators at campus-based Benefits Hubs were **25% more likely to persist to the next term and/or complete a credential than those who did not receive services.**(6) By improving students' access to basic needs benefits, we are investing in the strength of our workforce and community.

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– BRIDGE TO FINISH PILOT STUDY

Components of House Bill 1559 and Senate Bill 5566.

- Establishes the Benefits Navigator Grant Program at institutions of higher education, university campuses, and tribal institutions.
- Creates on-campus Benefits Resources Hubs.
- Hires full-time benefits navigators.
- Enacts the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Pilot Program at select campuses.
- Creates campus-level Student Basic Needs Task Forces and a state-level Student Basic Needs Work Group.

The Washington State Legislature can make a significant investment in the academic success and equity of postsecondary students by passing HB 1559 / SB 5566.

The Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition is a statewide coalition of organizations and individuals committed to ending hunger and fighting poverty in Washington state.

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References

1,2,3,4,5 Washington Student Achievement Council. (January 2023). Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students. Retrieved January 30, 2023, from <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>

6 United Way of King County. (January 2023). Bridge to Finish Outcome Study Snapshot. Retrieved January 30, 2023, from <https://www.uwkc.org/helping-students-graduate/bridge-to-finish/>