

Hello Members of the committee,

My name is Daniel, I'm here with OSA. We are here trying to discuss the food and housing issue primarily on behalf of students, although this issue ultimately affects many more than that. People using government resources, such as SNAP, shelters, and food pantries, have a stigma attached to their aid, which affects their ability to get the amount of help they need at an institutional level. At the core of this issue, people will stop eating or paying rent so they can go to school and/ or support their family or drop out of school to pick up more hours working to make ends meet.

As a student 25 grand deep in debt, I am paying for tuition and short term security in the form of food, housing, and fees through loans that I am privileged enough to receive. I acknowledge that other students are in even more fragile financial situations and may not have the privileges I have had to be in this undertaking at all. I haven't even reached the halfway point for my education's toll, and for many taking out this debt is a potential life-sentence that hinders someone from gaining social mobility. My generation was promised that higher education was a ticket to a better life; however, now students are looking at drastic measures to get that ticket because they are priced out and can't eat/take care of themselves or their families while going to school. This leaves those trying to break the cycle of poverty at a huge disadvantage. I am trying to advocate for my friends and peers who are too busy hustling at work and school to be here and advocate for themselves.

Right now I'm doing okay, but every term my resources become more scarce and unstable whilst digging a deeper hole. Meanwhile I'm starting a business, volunteering, and finishing my transfer degree. If something goes wrong, I will need to cut something out of my life in order to make ends meet. Luckily for me, I have activities I can afford to cut; but again, the people that need help with food and shelter usually will cut their most expensive endeavor first: their education.

Please help us prioritize food and housing insecurity so that my peers and I can focus on worrying about midterms, not where our next meals or shelter comes from.