

November 24, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Labor-H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
House Labor-H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Labor-H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Labor-H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The undersigned organizations representing education advocates, youth advocates, and the business community write to express grave concern about recent media reports of a proposal to redirect \$2 billion in funding for Pell Grants for other purposes. Based on the most recent CBO estimates, this action would result in a \$3.6 billion funding gap in FY2016, and even larger funding gaps over the next 10 years. Such funding gaps could necessitate deep and harmful cuts in Pell Grants when a college degree has never been more important or less affordable.

Recent budget agreements reduced Pell Grant costs by more than \$50 billion over 10 years, partially through the elimination of “year-round” Pell Grants and “Ability to Benefit” provisions and by reducing how long students may receive Pell Grants. There is now growing bipartisan support in place to re-establish “year-round” Pell, but taking funding from Pell Grants this year would make it even more difficult to do so, as well as make further cuts to the program more likely. Congress should invest in higher education for low-income students by funding Pell, not trade off crucial investments in the success of low-income children, youth, and adults against each other. Even with the scheduled increase in the Pell Grant maximum to \$5,830 in the 2015-16 year, the maximum grant will cover less than one-third (30 percent) of the cost of college—the lowest since the start of the program.

We urge the Committee to protect funding for the Pell program, which serves nine million students annually and is one the most valuable investments in higher education. Taking money from Pell threatens the economic security of young adults who go to school to improve their job

prospects and undercuts efforts to address severely high young adult unemployment and the skills gap. We therefore urge all members of the Appropriations Committee **to protect the Pell Grant surplus and maintain current discretionary funding for Pell Grants.**

We appreciate your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Student Association of Community Colleges

Asian American and Pacific Islander Association of Colleges and Universities (APIACU)

Business-Higher Education Forum

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

The Education Trust

Japanese American Citizens League

The Institute for College Access & Success

Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA)

Michigan College Access Network

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)

National Campus Leadership Council

National Council of La Raza

National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE)

National Skills Coalition

National Urban League

New York Public Interest Research Group

One Million Degrees

Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Sierra Student Coalition

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

Student Debt Crisis

uAspire

United States Chamber of Commerce

Working America

Yes We Must Coalition

Young Invincibles

CC: Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees

Please note: This letter was updated on December 2 to include organizations that asked to sign the letter after it was submitted on November 24, 2014.