

November 17, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Labor-H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Labor-H. Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Labor-H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The federal Pell Grant program helps more than eight million low- and moderate-income students attend and complete college. As organizations that advocate for college access, success and affordability, we are encouraged that the recent Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 enables Congress to avoid cutting Pell Grant funding and instead maintain and help restore federal investment in education.

Both the House and Senate FY2016 education appropriations bills cut Pell Grant funding by at least \$300 million. Although these cuts would not affect the much-needed scheduled increase in the maximum Pell Grant in academic year 2016-17, **they would require Congress in the next two years to either find hundreds of millions more funding for Pell Grants or make harmful cuts.** For example, the House FY2016 appropriations bill would create a \$634 million Pell Grant funding gap *next year* (for FY2017) where one would not otherwise exist. Such a funding gap would necessitate either increased appropriations or harmful cuts at a time when families are struggling to pay for college. Moreover, there is growing bipartisan support for reestablishing access to year-round Pell Grants, but taking funding from Pell Grants this year would make it more difficult to do so and make further cuts to the program more likely, as cutting Pell Grant funding in FY2016 significantly increases the funding gaps projected in the coming years.

Already, the maximum Pell Grant covers less than one-third of the cost of attending a four-year public college – the lowest share in more than 40 years. We need to be investing in Pell Grants to help more Americans improve their job prospects and increase economic mobility.

We therefore urge you not to cut Pell Grant funding and to maintain or increase current discretionary funding for Pell Grants. Let's build on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 and make college more affordable by protecting one of our most valuable investments in higher education and in the economic security of young Americans.

Thank you for your attention to this vital program. We look forward to working with you on many other important higher education issues as the 114th Congress debates re-authorization of the Higher Education Act.

Sincerely,

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Student Association of Community Colleges (ASACC)
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
Business-Higher Education Forum
Campaign for America's Future (CAF)
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)
Consumer Action
Consumers Union
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
The Education Trust
The Institute for College Access & Success
Michigan College Access Network
The Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA)
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE)
National Education Association (NEA)
National Skills Coalition
NYPIRG
One Wisconsin Now
Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable
The Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM)
Thurgood Marshall College Fund
Scholarship America
SEIU
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Student Debt Crisis
uAspire
UNCF
USPIRG
Veterans Education Success (VES)
Yes We Must Coalition
Young Invincibles

CC: Chairs, Ranking and Members of the full House and Senate Appropriations Committees