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House FY18 Spending Bill Cuts Pell Grants by \$3.3 Billion and Freezes Maximum Pell Grant

“The House FY2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education [appropriations bill](#), released today and scheduled for initial consideration tomorrow, cuts \$3.3 billion from Pell Grants and freezes grant amounts. The Pell Grant is our nation’s most effective investment for ensuring equitable access to higher education, and plays a critical role in reducing the already high debt burden for low- and middle income students. These proposals to undermine the Pell Grant are grossly out of step with the goal of growing a robust, educated, and competitive workforce.

“This bill raids \$3.3 billion from Pell Grants, a move that echoes the cut requested by the President in the [Administration’s FY 2018 Budget](#). This \$3.3 billion cut is the equivalent of the average Pell Grant award for nearly 900,000 students—more than the number of Pell Grant recipients attending college in Texas, Pennsylvania, and Iowa combined. This deep cut comes on top of the \$1.3 billion already taken from Pell Grants in May’s [FY17 spending agreement](#). In total, that’s \$4.6 billion in cuts to funds intended for students to support college access and affordability.

“Moreover, the bill freezes Pell Grant award amounts for the first time in six years, which would, in real terms, decrease the [value of the grant](#) by at least \$165, because the award will no longer keep up with inflation, let alone the faster-rising costs of college. The current maximum Pell Grant covers the lowest share of college costs in over forty years, and Pell Grant recipients are already [more likely](#) to borrow and have to borrow much more than their higher income peers to complete college.

“House appropriators should reject this assault on equitable access to higher education, which has never been more critical for securing a career and growing America’s economy. We urge Congress to instead keep all Pell funding in the Pell program, and make [investments](#) necessary to reverse the trend of the grant’s declining purchasing power.”

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An independent, nonprofit organization, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) works to make higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds. Our Project on Student Debt works to increase public understanding of rising student debt and the implications for our families, economy, and society. For more information see www.ticas.org or follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).