

June 25, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair and Ranking Members,

As you work towards a final spending agreement for fiscal year 2019, the undersigned organizations representing students, veterans, colleges, consumers, financial aid administrators, college access providers, scholarship providers, education advocates, civil rights advocates, and the business community, write to stress the critical value of the Pell Grant, and corresponding need to continue making the same key investments provided in the fiscal year 2018 Omnibus that retained all current Pell Grant funds in the Pell Grant program and increased the maximum grant.

We are grateful that the 2018 Omnibus protected all Pell Grant funds for use in the Pell Grant program, and are encouraged that the fiscal year 2019 education spending bill passed out of the House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee similarly protects all Pell Grant funding. Taking money away from Pell Grants would place key improvements, like ensuring the award amount at minimum keeps pace with inflation, further out of reach. It could also leave Pell Grants more vulnerable to future harmful cuts.

The 2018 Omnibus furthermore increased the maximum Pell Grant award by \$175, a meaningful 3 percent increase that provided a critical one-time offset to the loss of the grant's automatic annual inflation adjustment. This important investment prevented further decline in the grant's purchasing power. However, the current maximum Pell Grant still covers just 28 percent of the cost of attending a four-year public college, and the House fiscal year 2019 education spending bill under consideration includes no increase in the current maximum grant.

Without continued annual investment, the real value of students' Pell Grants will continue to decline, and data show that the 7.5 million students who rely on Pell to continue their education after high school already are more than twice as likely as others to borrow student loans, and graduate from college with an average of \$4,500 more debt than their higher income peers. At a time when a postsecondary credential or degree is an increasingly necessary gateway to a meaningful career, a strong Pell Grant is critical to ensuring that students from all financial backgrounds are able to participate and grow a strong, diverse economy.

The increase in the caps provided in the recent two-year Congressional budget agreement provides an opportunity for a fair allocation that adequately supports all of the important programs in this appropriations bill, including Pell. We urge you to continue to prioritize the Pell Grant in the fiscal year 2019 education spending bill by maintaining all Pell Grant funds in the Pell Grant program and increasing the maximum award to at least keep pace with inflation.

Signed,

Allan Hancock College
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
Americans for Financial Reform
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Cal State Student Association (CSSA)
California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office
California EDGE Coalition
Campaign for College Opportunity
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Responsible Lending (CRL)
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Consumer Action
Consumers Union
Democrats for Education Reform
Demos
Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath)
Equal Justice Works
Excelencia in Education
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Foothill-De Anza Community College District
Generation Progress
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Higher Ed, Not Debt
Higher Education Loan Coalition
Higher Learning Advocates
Hildreth Institute
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
John Burton Advocates for Youth
KIPP
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition
NAACP
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP)
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
National Campus Leadership Council
National College Access Network (NCAN)
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)
National Scholarship Providers Association (NSPA)
National Urban League
PHENOM (Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Student Action
Student Debt Crisis
Student Parent HELP (Higher Education for Low Income People) Center at the University of Minnesota
Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC)
Student Veterans of America
The American Association of State Colleges and Universities
The Education Trust
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
The State University of New York System
uAspire
UnidosUS
United Negro College Fund (UNCF)
United States Student Association (USSA)
University of California
University of California Student Association (UCSA)
Veterans Education Success (VES)
Women Employed
Yes We Must Coalition
Young Invincibles