

July 24, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

Absent Congressional action, the maximum Pell Grant award will no longer adjust with inflation after this upcoming school year. As costs for students continue to rise, ending the annual inflation adjustment is — in real terms — a cut to the value of the Pell Grant. As institutions of higher education and organizations that support and advocate for students, we urge you to support our nation’s students by continuing the annual indexation of Pell Grants to inflation.

Pell Grants are the foundation of our national investment in higher education, giving low-income students the opportunity to go to and graduate from college and pursue careers that increasingly require a postsecondary education. This year, Pell Grants will help over 7.5 million students — including one-third of all White students, two-thirds of all Black students, and half of all Latino students — continue their education after high school.¹

But right now, the maximum Pell Grant covers less than 30 percent of the average cost of attendance at a public, four-year institution — resulting in its lowest purchasing power in over 40 years.² For the last five years, indexation has played a critical role in preventing further decline of the historically low purchasing power of the current Pell Grant. If Congress fails to continue the adjustment, Pell students would see the buying power of their awards reduced drastically. In 10 years, with the award frozen at its current amount, the grant will cover only *one-fifth* of college costs.³

¹ Congressional Budget Office (CBO), January 2017 baseline projections for the Pell Grant program, <http://bit.ly/2mLy0nk>, Table 2; and Ed Trust calculation NPSAS:12 using PowerStats.

² Ed Trust calculation using College Board’s *Trends in College Pricing*, https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/2016-trends-college-pricing-web_1.pdf, and U.S. Department of Education maximum Pell award figure, <https://ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html?exp=0>.

³ U.S. Department of Education, “New U.S. Department of Education Report Highlights Colleges Increasing Access and Supporting Strong Outcomes for Low-Income Students,” <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-us->

This decreased buying power exacerbates already significant financial barriers for students. In fact, after grant funding from all sources is considered, low-income students still have to find a way to finance, on average, the equivalent of three-quarters of their family income to cover their net college costs — leading them to disproportionate levels of debt.⁴ Pell Grant students are already more than twice as likely to have student loans. Nine in 10 Pell Grant recipients graduate from four-year colleges with student debt, and their average debt is nearly \$5,000 more than their higher income peers.⁵ In this economy where postsecondary credentials are critical for pursuing a career, these financial barriers significantly limit social mobility and the availability of a skilled workforce; and we cannot afford to let the obstacles become even greater.

Congress made an important investment in fiscal year 2017 by restoring access to Pell Grants year-round. But that step alone is not enough. Without action to maintain the inflation adjustment, students will face a decline in their aid. We urge you to continue the annual indexation for Pell Grants with the same determination and bipartisan support you showed for restoring year-round Pell.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Alabama

Alabama Possible
Troy University

Arizona

Arizona State University
Northern Arizona College Resource Center
Phoenix College

Arkansas

Arkansas State University - Beebe
Arkansas State University - Jonesboro
Arkansas State University - Mountain Home
Arkansas State University - Newport
Arkansas State University Mid-South
Arkansas State University System
Arkansas Tech University

department-education-report-highlights-colleges-increasing-access-and-supporting-strong-outcomes-low-income-students.

⁴ Ed Trust calculation NPSAS:12 using PowerStats.

⁵ Calculations by TICAS on data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2011-12.

California

10,000 Degrees

Allan Hancock College

Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities

California Community Colleges

California EDGE Coalition

California Polytechnic State University

California State University, Chico

California State University, Dominguez Hills

California State University, East Bay

California State University, Fresno

California State University, Fullerton

California State University, Long Beach

California State University, Los Angeles

California State University, Monterey Bay

California State University, Northridge

California State University, Sacramento

California State University, San Bernardino

California State University, San Marcos

California State University, Stanislaus

Campaign for College Opportunity

Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California

Cerritos College

Chaffey College

Chapman University

Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science

College of the Canyons

College of Marin

Community College League of California

Contra Costa Community College District

Crafton Hills College

De Anza College

Faculty Association of California Community Colleges

Foothill College

Hartnell College

Humboldt State University

Imperial Community College District

Imperial Valley Community College

John Burton Advocates for Youth

Long Beach Community College District

Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

Los Angeles Community College District

Los Angeles Pierce College

Los Rios Community College District

Mt. San Antonio College

Riverside City College
San Bernardino Community College District
San Bernardino Valley College
San Diego State University
San Joaquin Delta College
San Jose City College
San Jose State University
Santa Barbara City College
Shasta College
Sonoma State University
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
The California State University
University of California
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Riverside
University of California, Santa Cruz
Vanguard University of Southern California
West Los Angeles College
Whittier College

Colorado

Colorado State University
Colorado State University - Pueblo
Colorado State University Global Campus
Colorado State University System
Denver Scholarship Foundation
Metropolitan State University of Denver
University of Northern Colorado

Connecticut

Capital Community College

District of Columbia

Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
DC Prep: PrepNext
Trinity Washington University

Delaware

University of Delaware

Florida

Broward College
Florida A&M University
Florida Gulf Coast University

Indian River State College
Miami Dade College
Valencia College

Georgia

Georgia Gwinnet College
Georgia Independent College Association
University of North Georgia
University of West Georgia

Hawaii

University of Hawaii

Illinois

Chicago Urban League
DePaul University
Governors State University
Illinois College Access Network
Joliet Junior College
Moraine Valley Community College
Northeastern Illinois University
Southern Illinois University System
University of Illinois at Chicago
Wilbur Wright College

Indiana

Goshen College
Indiana University Northwest

Iowa

Northeast Iowa Community College

Kansas

Donnelly College
Kansas Independent College Association

Kentucky

Kentucky Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority

Louisiana

College Beyond (New Orleans, LA)
Dillard University
Southern University Law Center
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Maryland

CollegeTracks
First Generation College Bound, Inc.
Frostburg State University
Maryland Independent College & University Association
Montgomery College
Morgan State University
Towson University
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
University of Maryland, University College
University System of Maryland

Massachusetts

Berkshire Community College
Bunker Hill Community College
Fisher College
Middlesex Community College
North Shore Community College
Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM)
Salem State University
Smith College
University of Massachusetts
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of Massachusetts Boston
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Wellesley College

Michigan

Grand Rapids Community College
Michigan Association of State Universities
Michigan College Access Network
Mott Community College
Oakland University
Western Michigan University

Minnesota

Metropolitan State University

Mississippi

Mississippi Valley State University

Missouri

College Bound - St. Louis
De La Salle, Inc.

Northwest Missouri State University
Saint Luke's College of Health Sciences
St. Louis Graduates
St. Louis Regional Chamber
The Active Advocacy Coalition
The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis
University of Missouri - Kansas City
University of Missouri System

Nevada

Nevada State College

New Jersey

Fairleigh Dickinson University
Felician University
New Jersey City University
Rutgers University - Newark

New Mexico

Clovis Community College
Northern New Mexico College
The University of New Mexico
University of the Southwest

New York

Baruch College of the City University of New York
Bronx Community College, CUNY
Brooklyn College
Buffalo State College
College of Staten Island, CUNY
CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy
CUNY School of Professional Studies
Hostos Community College, CUNY
Kingsborough Community College
Lehman College, CUNY
Macaulay Honors College of CUNY
Mercy College
Queens College, CUNY
Queensborough Community College, CUNY
State University of New York at Fredonia
State University of New York at Oneonta
State University of New York The College at Brockport
Stella and Charles Guttman Community College
The City College of New York (CUNY)
The State University of New York

Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology
York College, CUNY

North Carolina

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
North Carolina Central University
UNC Scholars' Latino Initiative
University of North Carolina Charlotte
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Ohio

Cleveland State University
Lorain County Community College
Wright State University

Oklahoma

Cameron University
Tulsa Community College

Oregon

Western Oregon University

Pennsylvania

Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania
Bucknell University
Butler County (PA) Community College
Cabrini University
Community College of Allegheny County
Community College of Beaver County
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
Franklin & Marshall College
HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College
Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine
Lehigh Carbon Community College
Lincoln University of Pennsylvania
Luzerne County Community College
Northampton Community College
Pennsylvania Highlands Community College
Philadelphia Futures
Reading Area Community College
Slippery Rock University

Puerto Rico

EDP University of Puerto Rico
Inter American University of Puerto Rico

Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico
San German Campus of Inter American University of Puerto Rico
San Juan Bautista School of Medicine

Rhode Island

Community College of Rhode Island
Learning for Life at Rhode Island College

South Carolina

Benedict College
Francis Marion University
South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities

Tennessee

Bethel University
Christian Brothers University
Fisk University
Johnson University
Lane College
Lincoln Memorial University
Martin Methodist College
Southern Adventist University
Tennessee College Access and Success Network
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association
The University of Memphis
Watkins College of Art

Texas

Amarillo College
Brazosport College
College Forward
Genesys Works Houston - Alumni Program
Houston Baptist University
Lamar Institute of Technology
Lamar State College – Orange
Lamar University
Northwest Vista College
Our Lady of the Lake University
Sam Houston State University
San Antonio College
Southwest Texas Junior College
St. Edward's University
St. Philip's College
Texas A&M International University

Texas State University
Texas State University System
Texas Tech University
Texas Wesleyan University
The Commit! Partnership
University of Houston
University of Texas at Arlington
Waco Foundation
Western Texas College

Utah

Dixie State University
Utah System of Higher Education

Virgin Islands

University of the Virgin Islands

Virginia

George Mason University
James Madison University
Mountain Empire Community College
Virginia Commonwealth University

Washington

College Success Foundation
Heritage University
Olympic College
Renton Technical College
Saint Martin's University
Seattle Pacific University
University of Puget Sound
Walla Walla Community College
Whitworth University

Wisconsin

One Wisconsin Institute
University of Wisconsin - Madison
University of Wisconsin - Parkside
University of Wisconsin - Platteville
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point
University of Wisconsin System

National

Achieving the Dream
American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Student Assistance
Aspen Institute College Excellence Program
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Bottom Line
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
College Advising Corps
College Possible
Generation Progress
Higher Ed, Not Debt
Higher Education Loan Coalition
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
iMentor
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
League of United Latin American Citizens
Let's Get Ready
NAACP
National "I Have A Dream" Foundation
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
National Association of System Heads
National College Access Network
National Urban League
OneGoal
Southern Education Foundation
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)
Student Veterans of America
The Education Trust
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
Third Way
Thurgood Marshall College Fund
U.S. PIRG
uAspire
UNCF
Veterans Education Success
Wyman
Yes We Must Coalition
Young Invincibles

Letter updated with additional signers on August 14, 2017