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.
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

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