

July 18, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

We, the undersigned organizations, write you today to underscore the critical importance of keeping all existing Pell Grant funds in the Pell Grant program. We urge you to oppose the \$3.3 billion rescission from Pell Grants included in the FY 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, and instead work toward a funding agreement that protects Pell, provides sequester relief with parity between defense and non-defense spending, and provides adequate resources to support all of the important programs in this appropriations bill.

As you know, Pell Grants are the foundation of our national investment in higher education, and are essential for ensuring low-income students have the opportunity to attend and complete college, and pursue careers that increasingly require a postsecondary education. College graduates have higher wages and lower unemployment rates than their less educated peers, and Pell Grants are one of the keystones for growing a diverse, robust workforce and economy.

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. The vast majority of Pell Grant students come from families making \$40,000 or less, and the median family income of recipients has been declining over time.

The current 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. And absent Congressional action, FY18 will be the first time in six years that the grant will not even increase to keep pace with inflation. Pell Grant students are already more than twice as likely as other students to have student loans, and they graduate with an average of nearly \$5,000 more debt than their higher income peers.

The FY17 spending agreement rescinded \$1.3 billion from Pell Grants. Cutting an additional \$3.3 billion in FY18 would put much-needed investments to strengthen the Pell Grant further out of reach, and place the program at risk of future cuts to grant amounts or eligibility that would exacerbate student debt and limit access to higher education.

We urge you to reject this \$3.3 billion rescission without negatively impacting other education programs. To support students, the American workforce and a growing economy, Pell dollars must remain in the Pell Grant program.

Signed,

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
AFSCME  
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations  
American Federation of Teachers  
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)  
Center for Responsible Lending  
Complete College America  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Democrats for Education Reform  
Generation Progress  
Higher Ed Not Debt  
Higher Education Loan Coalition (HELIC)  
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU)  
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Michigan College Access Network  
NAACP  
National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)  
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  
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)  
National Education Association  
National Skills Coalition  
National Urban League  
Scholarship America  
Tennessee College Access and Success Network  
The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
The Education Trust  
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)  
uAspire  
UNCF  
United States Student Association (USSA)  
University of California Student Association (UCSA)  
UnidosUS (formerly the National Council of La Raza)  
U.S. PIRG  
Yes We Must  
Young Invincibles

CC: Members of the House Appropriations Committee