

September 5, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned organizations representing students, veterans, colleges, consumers, financial aid administrators, college access providers, scholarship providers, education advocates, civil rights advocates, workers, and the business community, write you today to stress the critical importance of retaining all current Pell Grant funds in the Pell Grant program. The Fiscal Year 2017 spending agreement already rescinded \$1.3 billion from Pell Grants, and critical investments are needed to cover the loss of the grant's annual inflation adjustment, which is scheduled to expire after this year. We implore you to reject any rescission from Pell Grants in Fiscal Year 2018, and instead use existing funds to responsibly increase the maximum Pell Grant award. We furthermore urge you to work toward a funding agreement that provides sequester relief with parity between defense and non-defense spending, and adequate resources to support all of the important programs in this appropriations bill, including Pell.

As you know, Pell Grants are the foundation of our national investment in higher education, and are essential for providing low-income students the opportunity to attend and complete college, and to pursue careers in an economy that increasingly requires 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, productive society and workforce.

Pell Grants 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 these students come from families making \$40,000 or less, and the median family income of recipients has been declining over time. Yet 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. Pell Grant students are already more than twice as likely as others to have student loans, and they graduate with an average of nearly \$5,000 more debt than their higher income peers.

Absent Congressional action, Fiscal Year 2018 will be the first time in six years that the Pell Grant will not increase to keep pace with inflation, resulting in a cut to the maximum grant in real terms, and further decline in the already low purchasing power of the grant. Allowing the grant to lose value will increase Pell Grant students' already high debt burden, or force them to forgo college altogether, which is why over [300 colleges and advocates](#) urged Congress to continue indexing the Grant to inflation.

To support students and a growing economy, Pell dollars must remain in the Pell Grant program, not be cut to cover gaps created by insufficient overall funding levels. Instead of rescinding Pell funds, we urge you to invest them in the Pell Grant by increasing the maximum award by an amount at least equal to what would be provided with an inflation adjustment while ensuring that Pell Grants remain on solid fiscal footing going forward.

Signed,

10,000 Degrees  
Achieve Atlanta  
Active Advocacy Coalition  
Alliance for Youth Action  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Council on Education (ACE)  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)  
AVID Center  
Cal State Student Association (CSSA)  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Chicago Urban League  
College Beyond  
College Bound St. Louis  
College Forward  
College Now Greater Cleveland  
College Possible  
CollegeTracks  
Consumer Action  
Denver Scholarship Foundation  
East Bay Leadership Council  
First Graduate  
Forward Montana  
Generation Progress  
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)  
Higher Ed, Not Debt (HEND)  
iMentor  
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Latino U College Access  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Lenawee College Access Network  
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce  
NAACP  
National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)  
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)  
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU)  
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)

National College Access Network (NCAN)  
One Wisconsin Now  
OneGoal  
PHENOM (Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts)  
Reach Higher Montana  
Scholarship America  
Silicon Valley Leadership Group  
Southern California College Access Network  
St. Louis Graduates  
Student Debt Crisis  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges  
Student Veterans of America (SVA)  
Students United (formerly Minnesota State Universities Student Association)  
The Campaign for College Opportunity  
The Education Trust  
The Higher Education Loan Coalition  
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)  
The National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP)  
The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis  
The Tennessee College Access and Success Network  
TRiO Programs at Virginia Tech  
uAspire  
UNCF  
United States Student Association (USSA)  
University of California Student Association  
U.S. PIRG  
Veterans Education Success (VES)  
Yes We Must Coalition  
Young Invincibles