



- Boston University
- Brandeis University
- Brown University
- California Institute of Technology
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Case Western Reserve University
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Dartmouth College
- Duke University
- Emory University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Harvard University
- Indiana University
- Iowa State University
- The Johns Hopkins University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- McGill University
- Michigan State University
- New York University
- Northwestern University
- The Ohio State University
- The Pennsylvania State University
- Princeton University
- Purdue University
- Rice University
- Rutgers University – New Brunswick
- Stanford University
- Stony Brook University –
- State University of New York
- Texas A&M University
- Tulane University
- University at Buffalo –
- State University of New York
- The University of Arizona
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, San Diego
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of California, Santa Cruz
- The University of Chicago
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Florida
- University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- The University of Iowa
- The University of Kansas
- University of Maryland, College Park
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- University of Missouri, Columbia
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of Oregon
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Rochester
- University of Southern California
- The University of Texas at Austin
- University of Toronto
- The University of Utah
- University of Virginia
- University of Washington
- The University of Wisconsin - Madison
- Vanderbilt University
- Washington University in St. Louis
- Yale University

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mark Meadows
Chief of Staff
The White House

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and McCarthy, Secretary Mnuchin, and Mr. Meadows:

On behalf of America’s leading research universities, I urge you to reach agreement on a another COVID-19 relief package that includes relief necessary to combat the COVID-19 virus and alleviate its harmful impacts on students, research universities, and hospitals that contribute mightily to our nation’s health, security, and economy.

The pandemic has caused substantial strain on research universities and hospitals, even as these same institutions fight on the front lines of the pandemic. Our nation’s ability to fight this pandemic is directly tied to the ability of our institutions, staff, and students to stay in the fight. Federal support for our research universities and students at this moment is vital to our nation’s success both now and in the future. In May, AAU estimated that the collective near-term financial impact of the pandemic to our 63 U.S. member universities was over \$8 billion. Because our institutions will be unable to resume normal on-campus operations this fall, this figure will continue to grow.

AAU members are among the largest, if not the largest, employers in their cities and states, and the harmful economic consequences of the pandemic to these institutions is felt beyond their campuses. Americans from all walks of life are dependent on us for their wellbeing, from doctors and nurses to facility and food service professionals. I urge you to consider [our recommendations](#) – developed with other university and research organizations – for significant relief for students, the research workforce, and the ability of research universities and hospitals to fight the pandemic and serve national interests.

Specifically, we urge you to include: at least \$46.6 billion to support students and higher education institutions and their ability to serve students; at least \$26 billion in research relief funding for federal research agencies; and temporary and targeted protections from potentially meritless COVID-19 lawsuits against colleges and universities that are making reasonable efforts to safeguard students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Research universities were among the first institutions to close in response to the COVID-19 virus, and campuses continue to face extraordinary challenges resulting from a transition to

online learning and commitment to ensuring the health and safety of our communities as we seek to resume in-person teaching and research activities, as health conditions permit. In collaboration with the American Council on Education and others, this month we conservatively [estimated \\$74 billion in existing financial need and reopening costs](#) for higher education institutions.

We are grateful that the Senate HEALS Act provides about \$29 billion and the House HEROES Act includes \$37 billion for student and higher education relief. Unfortunately, both bills fall short of the needs of our [request for \\$46.6 billion](#). Our request addresses near-term campus financial needs including need-based aid for students due to declining family incomes and revenue losses stemming from enrollment declines and closures of campus facilities that provide auxiliary revenue. We support the broad flexibility afforded by both the HEROES and HEALS Acts to colleges and universities on the allowable use of funds to best serve students and their educational needs. It is vital that additional higher education emergency relief funds be disbursed and administered in a timely and efficient way that meets taxpayers' expectations for accountability.

We are troubled by the pernicious provision in the HEALS Act to restrict the amount of higher education emergency relief aid based on the size of an institution's endowment. This provision penalizes students, faculty, and staff from these institutions who are experiencing the adverse consequences of the pandemic just as those at other institutions. Moreover, the provision reinforces the ill-conceived and harmful endowment excise tax included in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that takes financial resources away from students and research. We urge you to exclude this provision in the final legislation.

The pandemic has caused enormous disruptions to federally supported research to the detriment of our nation's research enterprise. The relief that we seek would make significant strides in avoiding long-term and devastating consequences to federal research which underpins American innovation, economic competitiveness, and security. While we are grateful the House HEROES Act and the Senate HEALS Act recognize the need for research relief for the National Institutes of Health. It is essential to acknowledge that other research supported by other federal agencies continues to face disruptions. The [research relief funds we request](#) are not intended to expand the nation's investment in research but are needed to preserve the current investment already made by taxpayers. This funding would help ensure that extramural work funded by the federal research agencies can be completed and that federally supported researchers across the country continue to be supported.

The bipartisan, bicameral RISE Act (H.R. 7308 and S. 4926) – currently cosponsored by over 100 members of Congress and [endorsed by AAU and over 300 universities, science, engineering, and business organizations](#) – provides a guide for the research relief needed to protect American science and the STEM jobs that underpin our research enterprise. As specified in the RISE Act, we recommend the following levels for emergency supplemental appropriations: Department of Defense – \$3 billion; Department of Energy – \$5 billion; National Science Foundation – \$3 billion; NASA – \$2 billion; Department of Agriculture – \$380 million; Institute for Education Sciences – \$200 million; NOAA – \$350 million; NIST – \$300 million; and EPA – \$200 million. Also, consistent with the RISE Act, our recommendations, and the needs estimated by NIH, we support the \$10.5 billion in research relief for NIH included in the HEALS Act.

As our nation's colleges and universities prepare to return to in-person learning and related campus activities, it is essential that their decisions are not premised on making a trade-off between safety and the economy. To that end we urge the inclusion of [temporary and targeted liability protections](#) related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These protections are essential to safeguard higher education institutions and systems – and their affiliated nonprofits, healthcare providers, and research enterprises – from excessive and speculative lawsuits arising out of the pandemic. Institutions are taking countless steps to align with public health and safety standards to safeguard students, faculty, staff, and visitors and these

efforts should not go unnoticed. We are pleased the Senate HEALS Act includes limited liability protections and strongly support their inclusion in the final negotiated legislation.

Additionally, there other important issues you are considering that affect research universities. As you negotiate the next relief bill, we urge you to:

- J) Reject the inclusion of the [Safeguarding American Innovation Act \(S. 3997\)](#) that was included in the Senate pandemic relief package. S. 3997 seeks to address threats of foreign government interference in our nation's research enterprise but it has not been approved by either the House or Senate. AAU has concerns about certain provisions currently in the bill which could discourage talented students and scholars from coming to the United States to study and conduct research. We are also concerned this and other unintended consequences would hamper American Science. This legislation, S. 3997, has no place in a pandemic relief package. We urge that it be excluded from the final agreement and that it instead be considered in the Senate and House through regular order.
- J) Expand the paid sick and Family Medical Leave Act tax credits to make public universities and large private nonprofit universities eligible if they provide such paid leave. Enacted in the "Families First Coronavirus Response Act," these tax credits aid employers in the provision of leave time critical to aiding employees and their families as they cope with pandemic.
- J) Expand the Employee Retention tax credit enacted in the CARES Act to make public institutions eligible. The CARES Act created a refundable payroll tax credit of up to 50 percent of \$10,000 of the wages paid to each employee by employers during the COVID-19 crisis. Employers whose operations were "fully or partially" suspended due to government orders related to COVID-19 are eligible for the credit. While private nonprofits are eligible for this credit, public institutions are not.
- J) Expand the current grace period for student loan borrowers entering repayment by an additional six months as well as extending the language included in Sec. 3513 of the CARES Act providing temporary relief for federal student loan borrowers. These provisions should remain effective until September 30, 2021 or until the unemployment rate has fallen below 8 percent for three consecutive months. At a minimum, Congress should extend these provisions through the end of April 2021.

We call on you to work in a bipartisan manner and without further delay to complete work on a comprehensive COVID-19 relief package. Research universities and the federal government have a long-standing and successful partnership that is in critical need of support as we confront the virus and stand on the front line of fighting the pandemic. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Mary Sue Coleman, President

cc: Members of the 116th Congress