



Student Aid Alliance

April 3, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
2358B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
2358B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Cole and Blunt and Ranking Members DeLauro and Murray,

We write on behalf of our members to thank you for your efforts on behalf of the student aid programs in the FY18 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Under your leadership, your committees provided historic increases for the programs that help low- and middle-income students access and succeed in postsecondary education. In a time when agreements often seem hard to reach, we were extremely grateful for the way you and your members continued the tradition of strong bipartisan support for student aid.

As you now turn your attention fully to FY19 appropriations, we ask that you carry this commitment forward. To that end, we have amended the funding requests submitted on March 16 of this year to reflect the new levels in the omnibus. While we recognize that FY19 will have a smaller overall increase in nondefense discretionary spending, we urge you to continue keep student aid funding a priority as you prepare the Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill. The asks identified below are

intended to ensure that programs reach a level of funding consistent with what appropriators have provided in the past. The benefits of restoring funding in this manner are clear and direct. Enabling students to pursue postsecondary education has significant benefits for our country as a whole. A better-educated workforce means a stronger economy with lower unemployment, greater earnings, and less need for social services. A real effort to build our economy requires a vigorous postsecondary education component.

To that end, our members request at least the following FY 2019 appropriation levels for student aid programs:

Pell Grants: The Pell Grant maximum should be increased to \$6,230. The Pell Grant program is the single most important tool to enable low-income students to afford college. CBO estimates over 7.5 million students will use Pell Grants in the coming academic year to finance their education.

With the expiration of the automatic inflation adjustment for the Pell Grant maximum, we encourage you to continue to provide sufficient discretionary funding to ensure the equivalent is provided for the neediest students. An increase in the maximum grant to \$6,230 would reflect an adjustment to the FY18 Pell Max of \$6,095 at CBO's current projected CPI for 2018, ensuring that available aid keeps pace with inflation.

We strongly encourage the subcommittees to avoid rescinding appropriations from the Pell Grant program. In the last decade, benefits and eligibility for Pell Grants were repeatedly cut in response to funding shortfalls, pushing hundreds of thousands of students out of the program. Using Pell Grant surplus dollars to fund other programs in the Labor-HHS-Education bill puts the future stability of the program in jeopardy.

Campus-Based Aid: The campus-based aid programs are critical components of federal student aid. These are the original risk-sharing programs and require institutions to match federal funding to participate. The two main campus-based programs are the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS).

SEOG provides targeted, need-based grant aid of up to \$4,000 per student to 1.6 million students. Participating colleges match federal dollars to make more than \$1 billion in grant aid available. Over 99 percent of all SEOG recipients are Pell Grant recipients, and SEOG recipients have higher need on average than students receiving only Pell Grants. The FWS program provides federal and institutional funding to support part-time employment for more than 700,000 students to help them pay their college costs. Studies show that students who work on campus have higher graduation rates.

Over the last decade, both of these programs have seen level or reduced funding year after year, eroding their ability to serve low- and middle-income students. In order to restore the purchasing power of these programs, Congress should fund them at their pre-sequester levels, adjusted for inflation. For SEOG, that would be

\$1.028 billion and for FWS it would be \$1.434 billion. We understand that meeting these requests would require a substantial increase on top of the significant increases already provided in the FY18 omnibus, and may not be possible in one year due to the smaller overall increase in non-defense discretionary funding available in FY19. We ask that you consider the importance of restoring full funding for these programs and work towards that as you finalize FY19 appropriations.

TRIO: The Federal TRIO programs should be increased to \$1.07 billion. This funding amount would restore services for the more than 30,000 students who have lost access to the TRIO programs over the last decade. TRIO serves students from middle school through college, including military veterans and students with disabilities, helping them get into college and complete their programs.

GEAR UP: GEAR UP should be funded at the \$375 million. This increase would bring approximately 70,000 new students into the program and increase the overall number of students served to 770,000. GEAR UP has a proven track record of success in preparing students to enter and succeed in college.

Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN): Graduate education should be funded at \$48 million, the pre-sequester high water mark for funding graduate education in the humanities, adjusted for inflation. GANN competitive grants offer support to top students studying in fields directly related to American competitiveness.

LEAP Grants: Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership grants should be funded at \$65 million. While this program has not been funded since FY 2011, it has not been repealed, and provides a strong federal-state partnership for states to increase their efforts to support need-based financial aid.

Thank you for considering our request. Without the strong partnership between the federal government, states, institutions, and families, millions of students would not be able to go to college. We call on Congress to continue its bipartisan support of federal student aid programs— which combine grants, work-study, and loan programs—to enable low- and middle- income students to succeed.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
Co-Chairman



David Warren
Co-Chairman