

# United States Senate

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you begin your work on Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 2023) appropriations, we urge the Subcommittee to make sure that the discretionary allocation for Pell Grants effectively meets the needs of students, protects all Pell Grant program reserves, and expands eligibility to students who have been historically excluded or previously cut out from being eligible for Pell Grants. We respectfully request you provide a discretionary increase to the award consistent with the President's budget request for FY 2023, as Congress works toward doubling the Pell Grant for students by FY 2029.

We applaud your work to increase the Pell Grant maximum award in recent years, including the \$400 increase for FY 2022. We remain concerned that the value of the Pell Grant has steadily declined over the last several decades, from covering nearly four-fifths of the cost of attendance at a public, four-year college in 1975, to covering less than one-third of those college costs today. President Biden's FY 2023 budget proposes a \$2,175 increase to the Pell Grant maximum award for the 2023-2024 school year—a substantial investment toward reversing this decades-long decline.

The need for Congress to provide robust investment in the Pell Grant program is clear. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, students are still struggling just to meet their basic needs as they pursue higher education. The last two years have clearly demonstrated the obstacles food and housing insecurity pose to these students. It is critically important that the Subcommittee continues to protect all Pell Grant program reserves from any reallocation, raid, or rescission. Redirecting Pell Grant reserve funds would only hasten the coming shortfall in the program, which may occur within the next few years. Pell Grant funds should be retained in the program to increase the maximum award, reverse prior eligibility cuts, and provide new opportunities for higher education to historically underrepresented students.

Pell Grants are the cornerstone of federal higher education financial aid, and currently help nearly 7 million students pursue higher education in the United States. With a continued investment in the Pell Grant, we can better extend educational opportunity to more students from low- and moderate-income families—individuals who will be critical to meeting the demand for a highly-educated workforce. Thank you for your continued commitment to the federal Pell Grant program. We appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,