

April 13, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Labor--H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Labor--H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Labor--H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Labor--H Approp. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The undersigned organizations write to express how essential it is that Pell Grant program resources remain invested in Pell Grant recipients, and to urge you to oppose any efforts to redirect funding from Pell Grants for other purposes as you advance the FY 2017 appropriations process. Raiding Pell Grant funding to finance other programs would exacerbate student debt and limit opportunities for those students who most need a college education to advance in our economy and society.

Pell Grants provide access to college for low-income students who might not otherwise attend and complete college. Pell Grants serve nearly 8 million students, most from families making \$40,000 or less. Half of all Latino undergraduate students and more than 60 percent of African American students receive Pell Grants. Pell Grants reduce student loan debt for low-income students who are more than twice as likely to have loans as are other students.

A college degree is critical to increasing workforce productivity; college graduates have higher wages and lower unemployment rates than their less educated peers. Moreover, the U.S. economy needs more skilled workers, and employers often complain of a "skills gap." Despite the benefits of a skilled workforce, there is widespread concern about college costs. Again, Pell Grants make college possible for millions of low- and moderate-income students who might not otherwise attend and complete.

We strongly urge the Committee to protect funding for this valuable investment. In prior budget agreements, changes to student aid eligibility have reduced Pell Grants by more than \$50 billion, and currently the maximum grant covers less than 30 percent of the cost of attending a four-year, public college—the lowest share in more than 40 years. As you make decisions on allocations for each subcommittee and on funding levels for individual programs, we urge you to reject efforts to take funding from the Pell Grant program.

We appreciate your attention to this important issue.

Signed,

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)

Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Consumer Action

Generation Progress

Higher Ed, Not Debt

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)

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)

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

Student Debt Crisis

The Education Trust

The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)

The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf)

uAspire

United States Student Association (USSA)

U.S. PIRG

United Negro College Fund (UNCF)

Young Invincibles

CC: Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees
Members of the House and Senate