



April 11, 2024

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Baldwin and Aderholt and Ranking Members Capito and DeLauro:

On behalf of the Student Aid Alliance, we write to urge you to increase funding for student financial aid programs in fiscal year (FY) 2025. The continued bipartisan support for federal student aid ensures students have the opportunity to access and succeed in postsecondary education. Given the current budget caps, we understand the challenges appropriators have in providing increased investments and appreciate that the student aid programs were at least maintained at level funding for FY 2024. However, level funding diminishes awards for students due to inflation. We strongly believe Congress should continue to make funding for the federal student aid programs a top priority.

As you begin to work on the FY 2025 appropriations process, we ask that you advocate for an increased allocation to the Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education so that student aid funding can remain a high priority in the bill. Federal financial aid programs are vitally important to building a competitive workforce and providing ladders of economic mobility for low- and middle-income students.

For FY 2025, we respectfully request the following funding levels:

Pell Grants: The Pell Grant maximum should be increased to **\$13,000**, and Congress should make substantial progress in furtherance of this goal. The Pell Grant program is the single most important tool to enable low-income students to afford college, yet the current maximum Pell award covers the lowest share of costs in the program's over 50-year history. A maximum Pell Grant of \$13,000 would restore much of the purchasing power the grant had in FY 1975.

Currently, over 6 million students use Pell Grants to finance their education. Doubling the

maximum Pell award to \$13,000 (from its FY21 level) would increase the number of eligible students and would also lower the amount students need to borrow to pay for college.

Campus-Based Aid: The campus-based aid programs are critical components of federal student aid. These programs have always required “skin in the game” from institutions by requiring a match from colleges and universities to participate. The two main campus-based aid programs are the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS) programs. FSEOG provides targeted, need-based grant aid of up to \$4,000 per student to 1.6 million students.¹ Participating colleges and universities match federal dollars to make more than \$1.2 billion in grant aid available. Over 99 percent of all FSEOG recipients are Pell Grant recipients, and FSEOG 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 600,000 undergraduate and graduate students to help them pay their college costs and gain valuable work experience.

For FSEOG, we request that the funding level be increased to **\$1.15 billion**, and we request the funding level for FWS be increased to **\$1.603 billion**. Investing in these programs at our requested levels will ensure that these programs are keeping up with inflationary increases and allowing students to benefit from at least the same level of investment in these programs as Congress provided in FY 2010.

Federal TRIO Programs: The Federal TRIO programs should be increased to **\$1.26 billion**. Increased funding for TRIO would allow for strengthening the academic, financial, and cultural supports provided by TRIO and move the programs closer to their goal of serving 1 million low-income, first-generation students. An FY 2025 increase would particularly support growth in the number and size of TRIO’s Student Support Services program, as the Department of Education will award new grants in the fiscal year. As the only national undergraduate retention and support program, investment in this program is critical. A funding increase would also allow all TRIO programs to keep pace with the drastic increase in costs of maintaining high-quality services. This includes support for Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science, which provide intensive pre-college support for first-generation and low-income high school students; Veterans Upward Bound, supporting first-generation and low-income military veterans on the path to college; Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, which helps low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented college students prepare for graduate education; Talent Search, which provides postsecondary exploration for middle and high school students; and Educational Opportunity Centers, which help low-income and unemployed adults reenter the education pipeline.

A robust investment in TRIO will help ensure that low-income students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities successfully prepare for, enroll in, and graduate from postsecondary programs and make wise choices in financing their education.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness in Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): GEAR UP should be funded at **\$410 million**. This increase would bring approximately 40,000 new students into the program and increase the overall number of students served to 548,000. Increased funding is needed to meet the high demand from new communities, states, and expiring grantees to apply for new GEAR UP awards. 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): The GAANN program should be increased to **\$35 million** to reflect the need for increased investment and fund the

¹ U.S. Department of Education. (2024). *Fiscal year 2025 budget summary*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget25/summary/25summary.pdf> (all data in this letter is pulled from this source unless otherwise noted)

program at the authorized level. GAANN competitive grants offer support to top students studying in fields directly related to American competitiveness, and full funding of this program would allow for over 400 fellowships.

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 pursue their postsecondary education. 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,

SAA Steering Committee



Mark Becker
President, Association of Public
and Land-grant Universities



Walter G. Bumphus, Ph.D.
President and CEO, American Association
of Community Colleges



Justin Draeger
President and CEO, National Association of
Student Financial Aid Administrators



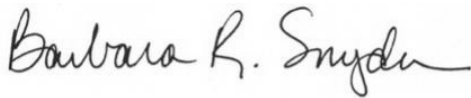
Kimberly Jones
President, Council for Opportunity in
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President, American Council on Education



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Universities



Dr. Charles L. Welch
President and CEO, American Association of
State Colleges and Universities

Members of the Student Aid Alliance:

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American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

American Association of Community Colleges

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Council on Education

American Federation of Teachers

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

American Psychological Association

APPA, "Leadership in Educational Facilities"

Association of American Universities

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Association of Community College Trustees

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities

Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area

Consortium on Financing Higher Education

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Council for Opportunity in Education

Council of Independent Colleges

Council on Social Work Education

EDUCAUSE

NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

National Association for College Admission Counseling

National Association of College and University Business Officers

National Association of College Stores

National Association of Colleges and Employers

National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education

National Association of Graduate and Professional Students

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

National Association of State Student Grant Aid Programs

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

National College Attainment Network

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

National Education Association

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association

The Phi Beta Kappa Society

UPCEA – Leaders in Professional, Continuing and Online Education

Work Colleges Consortium

Yes We Must Coalition