

January 28, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray, Vice Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chair Moore Capito, and Ranking Member Baldwin:

On behalf of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and its members, I write to express support and gratitude for the higher education funding included in the Fiscal Year 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-H) appropriations bill. We thank you for your leadership and continued support in sustaining and strengthening federal investments that support student success, align higher education with workforce and economic needs, and expand access to public postsecondary education, particularly at the 520 regional public universities (RPUs) across the nation.

Higher education programs funded through this bill play a critical role in ensuring that students from all backgrounds can pursue and complete postsecondary education or workforce credentials. Federal support for student aid programs, institutional capacity-building, and college access initiatives helps millions of students finance their education, reduces barriers to enrollment and completion, and promotes upward economic mobility.

Pell Grants and other student aid programs remain essential to affordability, particularly for the millions of low-income, first-generation, adult, and non-traditional students at RPUs. As non-institutional-related costs continue to rise, maintaining strong support for these programs is vital to preserving access to postsecondary education and preventing students from accumulating excessive debt or abandoning their educational goals.

In addition, the Labor-H bill funds higher education programs that strengthen institutional capacity at nearly 200 RPUs that are also Minority-Serving Institutions. Such efforts are particularly important for institutions that play a central role in educating America's future teachers, health professionals, and millions of other skilled workers. We appreciate the committee's bipartisan commitment to higher education and recognize the crucial role the Labor-H bill plays in advancing educational opportunities and economic growth.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We stand ready to serve as a resource as the committee transitions its work to the 2027 Labor-H funding bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles L. Welch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" being more prominent.

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

cc:

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Democratic Leader