

July 25, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

Absent Congressional action, the maximum Pell Grant award will no longer adjust with inflation after this upcoming school year. As costs for students continue to rise, ending the annual inflation adjustment is — in real terms — a cut to the value of the Pell Grant. As institutions of higher education and organizations that support and advocate for students, we urge you to support our nation’s students by continuing the annual indexation of Pell Grants to inflation.

Pell Grants are the foundation of our national investment in higher education, giving low-income students the opportunity to go to and graduate from college and pursue careers that increasingly require a postsecondary education. This year, Pell Grants will help over 7.5 million students — including one-third of all White students, two-thirds of all Black students, and half of all Latino students — continue their education after high school.¹

But right now, the maximum Pell Grant covers less than 30 percent of the average cost of attendance at a public, four-year institution — resulting in its lowest purchasing power in over 40 years.² For the last five years, indexation has played a critical role in preventing further decline of the historically low purchasing power of the current Pell Grant. If Congress fails to continue the adjustment, Pell students would see the buying power of their awards reduced drastically. In 10 years, with the award frozen at its current amount, the grant will cover only *one-fifth* of college costs.³

¹ Congressional Budget Office (CBO), January 2017 baseline projections for the Pell Grant program, <http://bit.ly/2mLyOnk>, Table 2; and Ed Trust calculation NPSAS:12 using PowerStats.

² Ed Trust calculation using College Board’s *Trends in College Pricing*, https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/2016-trends-college-pricing-web_1.pdf, and U.S. Department of Education maximum Pell award figure, <https://ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html?exp=0>.

³ U.S. Department of Education, “New U.S. Department of Education Report Highlights Colleges Increasing Access and Supporting Strong Outcomes for Low-Income Students,” <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-us->

This decreased buying power exacerbates already significant financial barriers for students. In fact, after grant funding from all sources is considered, low-income students still have to find a way to finance, on average, the equivalent of three-quarters of their family income to cover their net college costs — leading them to disproportionate levels of debt.⁴ Pell Grant students are already more than twice as likely to have student loans. Nine in 10 Pell Grant recipients graduate from four-year colleges with student debt, and their average debt is nearly \$5,000 more than their higher income peers.⁵ In this economy where postsecondary credentials are critical for pursuing a career, these financial barriers significantly limit social mobility and the availability of a skilled workforce; and we cannot afford to let the obstacles become even greater.

Congress made an important investment in fiscal year 2017 by restoring access to Pell Grants year-round. But that step alone is not enough. Without action to maintain the inflation adjustment, students will face a decline in their aid. We urge you to continue the annual indexation for Pell Grants with the same determination and bipartisan support you showed for restoring year-round Pell.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

10,000 Degrees
Achieving the Dream
Alabama Possible
Amarillo College
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Student Assistance
Arizona State University
Arkansas State University - Beebe
Arkansas State University - Jonesboro
Arkansas State University - Mountain Home
Arkansas State University - Newport
Arkansas State University Mid-South
Arkansas State University System
Arkansas Tech University
Aspen Institute College Excellence Program
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania

department-education-report-highlights-colleges-increasing-access-and-supporting-strong-outcomes-low-income-students.

⁴ Ed Trust calculation NPSAS:12 using PowerStats.

⁵ Calculations by TICAS on data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2011-12.

Baruch College of the City University of New York
Benedict College
Berkshire Community College
Bethel University
Bottom Line
Brazosport College
Bronx Community College, CUNY
Brooklyn College
Broward College
Bucknell University
Buffalo State College
Bunker Hill Community College
Butler County (PA) Community College
Cabrini University
California Polytechnic State University
California State University, Chico
California State University, Dominguez Hills
California State University, East Bay
California State University, Fresno
California State University, Fullerton
California State University, Long Beach
California State University, Los Angeles
California State University, Monterey Bay
California State University, Northridge
California State University, Sacramento
California State University, San Bernardino
California State University, San Marcos
California State University, Stanislaus
Cameron University
Campaign for College Opportunity
Capital Community College
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California
Cerritos College
Chaffey College
Chapman University
Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science
Chicago Urban League
Christian Brothers University
Cleveland State University
Clovis Community College
College Advising Corps
College Beyond (New Orleans, LA)
College Bound - St. Louis

College Forward
College of Marin
College of Staten Island, CUNY
College Possible
College Success Foundation
CollegeTracks
Colorado State University
Colorado State University - Pueblo
Colorado State University Global Campus
Colorado State University System
Community College of Allegheny County
Community College of Beaver County
Community College of Rhode Island
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy
CUNY School of Professional Studies
DC Prep: PrepNext
De La Salle, Inc.
Denver Scholarship Foundation
DePaul University
Dillard University
Dixie State University
Donnelly College
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
EDP University of Puerto Rico
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Felician University
First Generation College Bound, Inc.
Fisher College
Fisk University
Florida A&M University
Florida Gulf Coast University
Francis Marion University
Franklin & Marshall College
Frostburg State University
Generation Progress
Genesys Works Houston - Alumni Program
George Mason University
Georgia Gwinnet College
Georgia Independent College Association
Goshen College
Governors State University
Grand Rapids Community College
HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College

Hartnell College
Heritage University
Higher Ed, Not Debt
Higher Education Loan Coalition
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
Hostos Community College, CUNY
Houston Baptist University
Humboldt State University
Illinois College Access Network
iMentor
Imperial Community College District
Indian River State College
Indiana University Northwest
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Inter American University of Puerto Rico
James Madison University
Johnson University
Joliet Junior College
Kansas Independent College Association
Kentucky Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
Kingsborough Community College
Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine
Lamar Institute of Technology
Lamar State College - Orange
Lamar University
Lane College
League of United Latin American Citizens
Learning for Life at Rhode Island College
Lehigh Carbon Community College
Lehman College, CUNY
Let's Get Ready
Lincoln Memorial University
Lincoln University of Pennsylvania
Lorain County Community College
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Luzerne County Community College
Macaulay Honors College of CUNY
Martin Methodist College
Maryland Independent College & University Association
Mercy College
Metropolitan State University
Metropolitan State University of Denver
Miami Dade College

Michigan Association of State Universities
Michigan College Access Network
Middlesex Community College
Mississippi Valley State University
Montgomery College
Moraine Valley Community College
Morgan State University
Mott Community College
Mountain Empire Community College
NAACP
National "I Have A Dream" Foundation
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
National Association of System Heads
National College Access Network
National Urban League
Nevada State College
New Jersey City University
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
North Carolina Central University
North Shore Community College
Northampton Community College
Northeast Iowa Community College
Northeastern Illinois University
Northern Arizona College Resource Center
Northern New Mexico College
Northwest Missouri State University
Northwest Vista College
Oakland University
Olympic College
One Wisconsin Institute
OneGoal
Our Lady of the Lake University
Pennsylvania Highlands Community College
Philadelphia Futures
Phoenix College
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico
Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM)
Queens College, CUNY
Queensborough Community College, CUNY
Reading Area Community College
Renton Technical College
Riverside City College

Rutgers University - Newark
Saint Luke's College of Health Sciences
Saint Martin's University
Salem State University
Sam Houston State University
San Antonio College
San Diego State University
San German Campus of Inter American University of Puerto Rico
San Joaquin Delta College
San Jose City College
San Jose State University
San Juan Bautista School of Medicine
Seattle Pacific University
Slippery Rock University
Smith College
Sonoma State University
South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
Southern Adventist University
Southern Education Foundation
Southern Illinois University System
Southern University Law Center
Southwest Texas Junior College
St. Edward's University
St. Louis Graduates
St. Louis Regional Chamber
St. Philip's College
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)
State University of New York at Fredonia
State University of New York at Oneonta
State University of New York The College at Brockport
Stella and Charles Guttman Community College
Student Veterans of America
Tennessee College Access and Success Network
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association
Texas A&M International University
Texas State University
Texas Tech University
Texas Wesleyan University
The Active Advocacy Coalition
The California State University
The City College of New York (CUNY)
The Commit! Partnership
The Education Trust

The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis
The State University of New York
The Texas State University System
The University of Memphis
The University of New Mexico
Third Way
Thurgood Marshall College Fund
Towson University
Trinity Washington University
Troy University
Tulsa Community College
U.S. PIRG
uAspire
UNC Scholars' Latino Initiative
UNCF
University of California
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Riverside
University of California, Santa Cruz
University of Delaware
University of Hawaii
University of Houston
University of Illinois at Chicago
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
University of Maryland, University College
University of Massachusetts
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of Massachusetts Boston
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
University of Massachusetts Lowell
University of Missouri - Kansas City
University of Missouri System
University of North Carolina Charlotte
University of North Carolina Wilmington
University of North Georgia
University of Northern Colorado
University of Puget Sound
University of Texas at Arlington
University of the Southwest
University of the Virgin Islands
University of West Georgia

University of Wisconsin - Madison
University of Wisconsin - Parkside
University of Wisconsin - Platteville
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point
University of Wisconsin System
University System of Maryland
Utah System of Higher Education
Valencia College
Vanguard University of Southern California
Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology
Veterans Education Success
Virginia Commonwealth University
Waco Foundation
Walla Walla Community College
Watkins College of Art
Wellesley College
Western Michigan University
Western Oregon University
Western Texas College
Whittier College
Whitworth University
Wilbur Wright College
Wright State University
Wyman
Yes We Must Coalition
York College, CUNY
Young Invincibles