

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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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](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>.

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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

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

<sup>4</sup> Ed Trust calculation NPSAS:12 using PowerStats.

<sup>5</sup> 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