



Leadership and Advocacy

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April 14, 2016

Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Room S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Cochran and Ranking Members Lowey and Mikulski:

On behalf of the undersigned associations, we write to express our strong opposition to any effort to use funding taken from the Pell Grant program for any purpose outside the program itself in the Fiscal Year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill under consideration by your committees. We specifically urge you to use Pell funding for restoration of Year-Round Pell.

Pell Grants are critically important to ensure access to postsecondary education for nearly eight million low- and middle-income students who depend on Pell Grants to pursue their educations. In the last decade, benefits and eligibility for Pell Grants were repeatedly cut in response to funding shortfalls. This resulted in hundreds of thousands of students losing their eligibility entirely, and other seeing their awards reduced. The loss of year-round Pell grants after documented successes with the program was particularly troublesome.

As you are well aware, year-round Pell enjoys broad bipartisan support in Congress and near-universal endorsement among policy experts. Year-round Pell Grants were eliminated solely because Congress had to address an \$11 billion shortfall in the program at the time, not because of opposition to the policy itself. Now that the program has a projected \$7.8 billion surplus in FY 17, the time is right to reinstate this provision and broaden access and opportunity for American students.

The program's surplus represents funds that Congress deliberately set aside for broadening access and opportunity for American students. Encouraging all eligible students--no matter

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their credit accumulation or enrollment intensity--to attend college year-round will expedite time-to-degree, significantly lower opportunity costs, and allow more rapid entry into the workforce. It would therefore be entirely fitting to use the available surplus funding to restore this crucial benefit to needy students and return dividends to the nation in the form of accelerated degree attainment across sectors.

Regardless of the merits of other critical programs funded in the LHHS-ED appropriations bill, any use of Pell funds outside of the Pell program itself would be extremely shortsighted. Students cannot afford to continue subsidizing other areas of the budget. We urge you to support America's students and use of Pell Grant funding for much-needed year-round funding.

Sincerely,

Molly Corbett Broad



President

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Association of American 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
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
Council of Graduate Schools
EDUCAUSE
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
NASPA - Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
UNCF