

United States Senate

April 8, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your continued commitment to supporting working and middle class families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes from the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2) have already started to provide relief for American families, reaching communities throughout the United States. As we move from alleviating the immediate needs to crushing the virus and stabilizing the economy to build back better, we need to invest in our most important resource—our people. As such, we urge you to work with us on a plan to double the maximum Pell Grant award to ensure that postsecondary education is affordable and accessible to all.

The pandemic has taken a terrible toll on the educational aspirations of students across the country. A recent analysis from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows that fall enrollment in postsecondary education for recent high school graduates declined by 6.8 percent. For students in high poverty and high minority high schools, the drop-off was even greater. This is a crisis that will have long-term effects on our economy and equity, and the Pell Grant can and should be part of the solution.

Pell Grants have provided postsecondary opportunities for working and middle class families for nearly fifty years, making college more affordable for generations of students. But over time the value of the maximum Pell Grant award has steadily declined—from covering nearly four-fifths of the cost of attendance at a public, four-year institution in 1975, to covering less than one-third today. This decline has contributed to the dramatic increase in student loan debt as families struggle with college costs.

During your campaign, you committed to doubling the maximum Pell Grant award. Now is the time to do it. We urge you to include new investments in the Pell Grant program as part of the next package to restore and revitalize our economy. After all, we will not be able to build back better if we do not provide education and training for the American people to carry out this vital work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



JACK REED
United States Senator



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator



CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senator



CORY A. BOOKER
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United States Senator



TINA SMITH
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/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand

KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
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/s/ Bernard Sanders

BERNARD SANDERS
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DIANNE FEINSTEIN
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ELIZABETH WARREN
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United States Senator



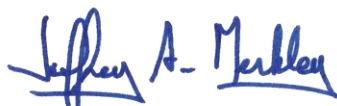
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RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

TAMMY DUCKWORTH
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