

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro The Honorable Tom Cole Chairwoman Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services,
Education and Related Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations House Committee on Appropriations 2358-B Rayburn
House Office Building 2358-B Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you begin work on this year's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we ask that you support significant investment in the Federal Pell Grant Program. We ask that you provide a total funding level of at least \$67 billion in discretionary and mandatory funds in Fiscal Year 2022 so that the maximum individual award can be increased to \$12,990, which is double the current maximum award.

Despite being the cornerstone of our nation's student financial aid system, Pell Grants today cover less than one-third of the average cost of attendance at a public four-year university, which is the lowest share of tuition in the program's history. Increased tuition costs, as well expenses like textbooks, housing, food, and transportation, have drastically diminished Pell's purchasing power.¹ This places greater strain on the students and families that the program was designed to help. At the current level, students from families earning \$30,000 or less need to spend more than 75 percent of their total income to cover the cost of a four-year college, and 50 percent of their annual income for a two-year college.² Doubling the maximum Pell Grant will significantly increase the award's purchasing power, thus ensuring it will truly benefit the students and families that need it most.

For nearly 60 years, Pell Grants have provided much needed financial assistance to low-income families, unlocking higher education opportunities for millions of students. Because these grants are awarded solely based upon a student's financial need and do not have to be repaid, they are often the only vehicle available to low-income students to pay for a college education. Strengthening the program will not only make college more affordable, but it will also improve outcomes by providing grant recipients more opportunity to focus on school, allowing them to complete their degrees sooner than they may otherwise. Helping the most in need students obtain a college degree will make our nation stronger by making it more equal, and by

¹ <https://www.thirdway.org/memo/why-we-should-double-the-pell-grant>

² <https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Why-Its-Time-to-Double-Pell.pdf>

reenforcing the idea that everyone should have an opportunity to obtain a college education regardless of family income.

There is widespread support for doubling the Pell Grant. As of March 2021, more than 1,200 education and public interest organizations support this action.³ According to a survey of college and university presidents, 79 percent of them believe that doubling the Pell Grant would most benefit schools and students.⁴ We have an opportunity to make one of the most significant investments in higher education in decades, and we need to take advantage of that opportunity by doubling the Pell Grant.

Thank you again for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to working with you on ways to expand access to a quality higher education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maxine Waters Mondaire Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style.

David N. Cicilline Maxine Waters Mondaire Jones *Member of Congress Member of Congress Member of Congress*

³ <https://www.dropbox.com/s/4bmn3sa0fsqhr5/Double%20Pell%20Letter%20-%20March%202021.pdf?dl=0>

⁴ https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/survey-shows-college-presidents-emerging-covid-19-more-confident-their-institutions-can?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=0682325c71-DNU_2021_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fbc04421-0682325c71-

ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES

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/s/ Joyce Beatty Member of Congress	/s/ Earl Blumenauer Member of Congress	/s/ Carolyn Bourdeaux Member of Congress
/s/ Anthony G. Brown Member of Congress	/s/ Julia Brownley Member of Congress	/s/ Cori Bush Member of Congress
/s/ G.K. Butterfield Member of Congress	/s/ Salud Carbajal Member of Congress	/s/ André Carson Member of Congress
/s/ Sean Casten Member of Congress	/s/ Judy Chu Member of Congress	/s/ Emanuel Cleaver, II Member of Congress
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/s/ Peter A. DeFazio Member of Congress	/s/ Diana DeGette Member of Congress	/s/ Suzan K. DelBene Member of Congress

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