

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

Thank you for your continued commitment to the federal Pell Grant program, and for your recent work to restore year-round Pell Grants in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017. This bipartisan compromise to restore year-round Pell Grants will provide students with the flexibility to move through their studies more quickly or stay enrolled in courses beyond the traditional two semesters, which will help improve student success. We also appreciate that this version of year-round Pell Grants is more flexible for students and institutions of higher education, and hence its benefits more broadly shared.

As you begin work on Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations, we urge the Subcommittee to make sure that the allocation for Pell Grants effectively meets the needs of students, and maintains or expands eligibility. Additionally, we ask that the Subcommittee provide an increase to the appropriated maximum grant given that the mandatory inflationary adjustment to the Pell Grant expires after the 2017-18 academic year. Without Congressional action in Fiscal Year 2018, there will be no increase to the maximum Pell Grant for the 2018-19 school year, adding to students' struggles to pay for the ever-increasing costs of college. We also urge you to work to ensure that surplus Pell Grant funds are used to build on our Fiscal Year 2017 bipartisan efforts to expand and strengthen the program rather than be diverted to fund unrelated and ineffective proposals such as the construction of a border wall. Pell Grant funds should be retained in the Pell Grant program to reinstate prior eligibility cuts and otherwise support current and future students who rely on this important program.

The need for Congress to provide robust investment in the Pell Grant program is clear. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs in our country demand higher education. By 2020, 65 percent of all job openings will require college education or training. We will not meet the demand for a highly-educated workforce without increasing the number of students from low- and moderate-income backgrounds who are able to afford and get access to higher education.


Pell Grants are the cornerstone of federal higher education financial aid, and currently help over 7.8 million students from low- and moderate-income families pursue higher education in the United States. We thank you again for your continued support of the federal Pell Grant program, and appreciate your consideration of these requests.


Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator

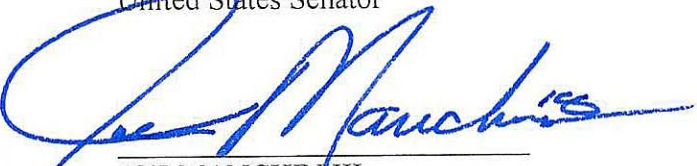

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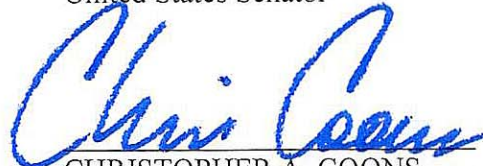
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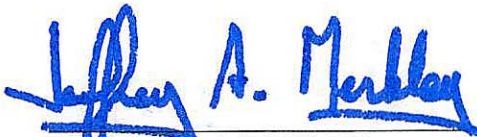
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