

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2019

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 your success in strengthening the value of the Pell Grant for students. We applaud your work to increase to the maximum Pell Grant in each of the last two years and to ensure that students can benefit from the grant year-round. However, we need to build on these steps if we are to reverse the decades-long decline in the purchasing power of the Pell Grant while we continue working toward a more permanent solution to enhance the value of the Pell Grant for students.

As such, as you begin work on Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations, we urge the Subcommittee to make sure that the discretionary allocation for Pell Grants effectively meets the needs of students, and maintains or expands eligibility to students who have been historically excluded or previously cut out of the program. We ask that the Subcommittee provide an increase to the appropriated maximum grant by at least inflationary levels until Congress can restore the mandatory inflationary adjustments to the Pell Grant within the Higher Education Act reauthorization.

Even with the Fiscal Year 2019 increase of \$100, the maximum Pell Grant will cover less than one-third of the cost of a public four-year college for our students with the most significant financial need. Furthermore, the average award this year decreased by \$23, and many more students will receive even less support. Without Congressional action in Fiscal Year 2020 to again increase the maximum Pell Grant, students and their families will fall further behind financially, endangering their ability to achieve their educational and career goals.

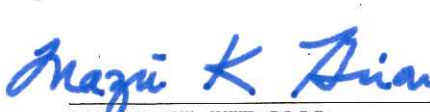
We also urge you to again ensure that all Pell Grant reserve funds are protected and retained within the Pell Grant program, and not siphoned off for unrelated programs through rescission, cancellation, or reallocation of any kind. Redirecting Pell Grant reserve funds would only hasten the coming shortfall in the program, which is expected within the next few fiscal years. Pell Grant funds should be retained in the Pell Grant program to increase the maximum award, reverse eligibility cuts that have denied access to students with financial need, and provide postsecondary opportunities for more nontraditional and underrepresented students.


The need for Congress to provide robust investment in the Pell Grant program is clear. College students are struggling just to meet basic needs in higher education. A recent U.S. Government Accountability Office report documented numerous studies finding that food insecurity and

hunger is prevalent among college students, with an estimated more than 30% of college students facing food insecurity. Furthermore, recent reviews of federal financial aid applications and surveys of college campuses have indicated that alarming numbers of students are identifying themselves as homeless or at risk of homelessness. With a continued investment in the Pell Grant we can better support our nation's students and increase the number of students from low- and moderate-income backgrounds who are able to access and afford higher education, which will be necessary to meet the demand for the highly-educated workforce of the future.

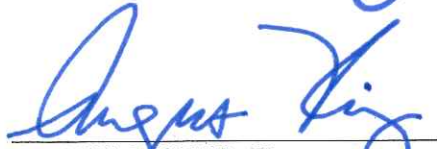
Pell Grants are the cornerstone of federal higher education financial aid, and currently help nearly 7 million students from low- and moderate-income families pursue higher education in the United States. We thank you again for your continued support of the Pell Grant program and appreciate your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,

  
MAZIE K. HIRONO  
United States Senator

  
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United States Senator


  
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United States Senator

  
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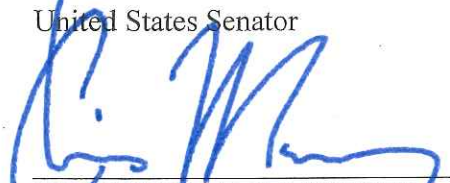
  
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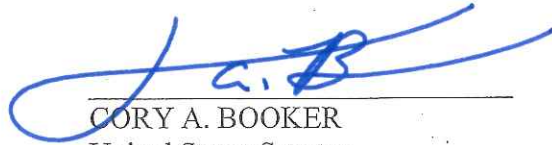
  
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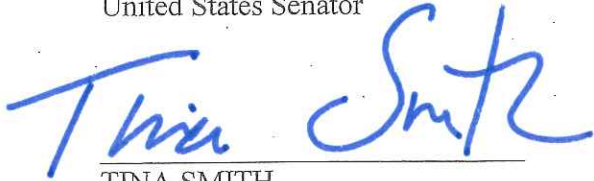




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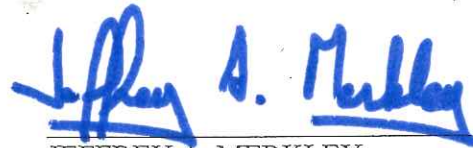
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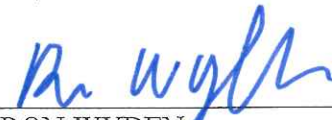
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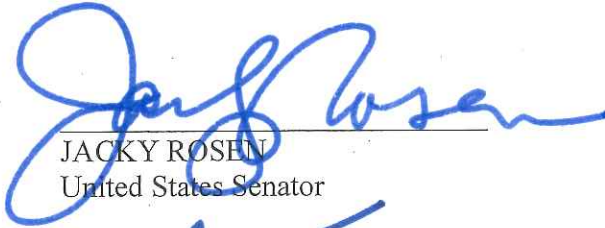
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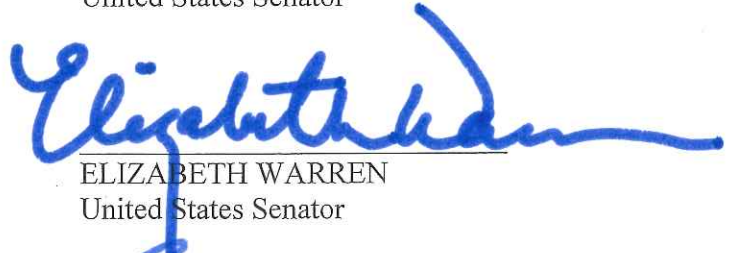
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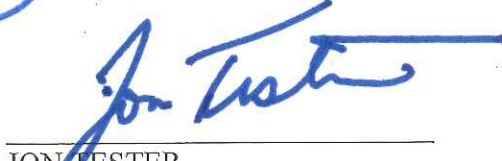
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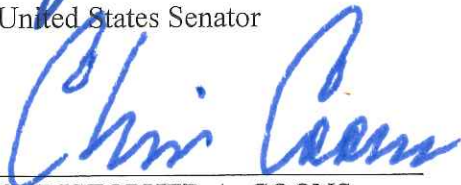
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United States Senator



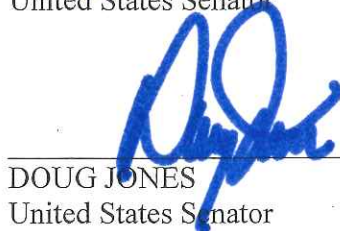
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