

June 23, 2015

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  
H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to offer our support for the Fiscal Year 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill passed by the subcommittee last week, and to encourage the members of the Committee to vote for its passage.

As advocates for the programs funded in this bill, we are well aware of the constraints the current budget situation imposes on discretionary levels. As was noted by members of both parties during the subcommittee markup, the imposition of sequestration caps ensures an appropriations process that sets funding far below what is required to effectively meet the real needs of the people these programs serve. We strongly support efforts to comprehensively address these arbitrary caps and restore appropriate discretionary funding.

Considering the reduced allocation, we are deeply appreciative of the efforts made by the members of your committee to preserve and expand the programs that American students depend on to access and succeed in postsecondary education. In addition, the levels within the bill reflect the vital importance of scientific research to the strength of our country.

Pell Grants are the foundational student aid program and for over forty years have been the primary support for low- and middle-incomes families to afford college. This bill recognizes the critical nature of this program and provides sufficient funding for the maximum Pell award to increase by \$140, to \$5,915. We are concerned, however, that the funding provided will reduce the available surplus, posing a real threat to the financial health of the program going forward. We would strongly encourage the committee to prioritize the restoration of that funding in the event a greater budget deal is reached.

This bill provides critical support to biomedical research, increasing funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by \$1.1 billion. This investment will help to keep America on the leading edge of biomedical research, stimulating the economy and improving the quality of life for millions of Americans.

These are just a few of the areas where this bill demonstrates a strong commitment to American higher education. It also includes significant increases for the TRIO and GEAR UP programs that help low-income students prepare for and succeed in college. The additional funding provided in this bill would allow 53,000 more students to be served by TRIO programs alone. Minority-serving institutions (including historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and others) will also see increases in support in this bill, better positioning them to advance their important work educating historically underserved populations.

Similarly, we were pleased with the Committee's recognition of the valuable role campus-based aid programs play in promoting access to higher education. These programs, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) and the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program, provide flexibility at the campus level to meet individual student needs and require matching investments by the participating institutions, leveraging federal dollars into even greater student aid.

Finally, our organizations appreciate the Committee's inclusion of language barring the Department of Education from further developing or implementing several regulatory efforts already underway. While we share many of the Department's stated goals, and have made repeated efforts to inform and improve their regulatory approaches, the agency has been unable or unwilling to address our concerns. Given their insistence on moving forward with these flawed approaches, the limitation language included in this bill is a necessary step to ensure that higher education issues are addressed in a thoughtful, comprehensive way with the full input of Congress and other stakeholders.

Our members are concerned with some of the cuts proposed, particularly the elimination of the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants and the \$4 million reduction in support for the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program. TQP grants provide the only federal funds dedicated to reforming teacher preparation, and GAANN is one of the few remaining federal programs that assists graduate students after years of cuts and eliminations. Key training programs authorized by the recently-reauthorized Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act have also been cut substantially. This will hinder the ability of the nation's postsecondary institutions to help close the skills gap that is of such great concern to the private sector. We strongly urge the members to reconsider these cuts, and prioritize their restoration if a budget deal allows for increased funding.

While we do not yet know the funding details for every program addressed in this bill, we are very encouraged by the Committee's recognition of the importance of higher education to our nation's social and economic future. The FY 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill carefully balances the needs of American students with the limitations imposed by the current fiscal climate. We thank you for your efforts, and look forward to working with you as the bill advances.

House FY16 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations  
June 23, 2015

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Molly Corbett Broad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Molly" being the most prominent.

Molly Corbett Broad  
President

On behalf of:

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Council on Education  
Association of American Universities  
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities  
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities  
Council for Opportunity in Education  
Council of Graduate Schools  
EDUCAUSE  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities  
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators  
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
Thurgood Marshall College Fund