

April 13, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Labor, HHS, Education and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Labor, HHS Education and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Labor, HHS, Education and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Labor, HHS Education and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

As you begin to work on the fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations process, Higher Learning Advocates would like to express our support for investments in key child care, higher education, and campus mental health programs. Specifically, we urge the inclusion of an \$8 million Emergency Aid Grant, \$500 million for the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) program, and \$15 million for the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant to address growing campus suicide prevention and mental health needs. We also strongly urge the Subcommittees to provide sufficient funding that would allow the maximum Pell Grant to be doubled in the coming years, a \$7.7 billion increase to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), an increase to the Basic Needs and Completion Fund grants, and an increase the Open Textbooks Pilot (OTP) program to \$14 million.

Higher Learning Advocates (HLA) is a non-profit advocacy organization working to shift federal policy from higher education to higher learning—education and training beyond high school that leads to a degree, credential, or employment. With more students participating in higher education than ever before, we strive to strengthen the connection between federal policy and the needs of today's students, employers, and communities.

When the pandemic hit, a spotlight was put on the various barriers that can impede today's students' ability to stay enrolled in higher education and complete their program of study. Congress' swift action to address the needs of today's students through emergency student aid grants was critical to their continued enrollment and success in higher education. Unfortunately, even after the pandemic is over, the ongoing needs of today's students will remain. We urge the subcommittees to make significant investments in key childcare, student supports, and campus mental health programs as part of the FY23 appropriations process. These investments are critical if we are to advance policies to reflect the needs of today's students and encourage a system of higher learning that is affordable and responsive.

The Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) were integral to helping students stay enrolled in their classes during the pandemic. The money helped address issues such as food and housing insecurity, unexpected medical expenses, loss of job, and other unexpected financial challenges that students faced. As those funds are dwindling, students still face similar challenges. Those who have access to these emergency funds are two times more likely to stay enrolled in school while those who withdraw from school are two times more likely to default on their student loans. It is critical that Emergency Aid Grants are made available even post COVID. We, therefore, urge the Subcommittees to make emergency aid permanent with an \$8 million investment in an Emergency Aid Grant.

We also request \$500 million in funding for the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS)—the amount needed to provide child care support to about six percent of Pell-eligible student parents of children ages 0-5. The CCAMPIS program provides vital support for the participation and success of low-income parents in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based child care, which is widely recognized as one of the most important supports for parenting college students. We are encouraged by the funding increase CCAMPIS received in FY22, but to best serve today's students, CCAMPIS needs a larger infusion of funds to meet current needs.

Additionally, we urge your subcommittees to provide \$15 million for the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant. This grant program allows college campuses to develop a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to mental health services for all college students, including those at risk for suicide, depression, and serious mental illness. These are critical problems to address, especially as the impact of the pandemic on mental health continues to emerge—in June 2020, [data](#) from the CDC showed that more than half of adults aged 18-24 had at least one adverse mental or behavioral health symptom, and more than a quarter had considered suicide in the past 30 days. This grant funding enables colleges to help students who are experiencing mental health challenges or contemplating suicide complete their studies and address their underlying mental health needs. As the mental health challenges on college campuses have grown, funding for this important program has become even more critical.

While that larger GLS grant was increased in the FY22 appropriations package, the GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grant was not. Unfortunately, the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of students has only begun to emerge and institutions of higher learning do not have the resources necessary to adequately support this growing need among their students.

Finally, we urge that you increase funding for the Pell Grant program to put the maximum grant on the path to doubling the grant amount in the coming years and link it to increased funding with inflation in future years. We also ask for an increase in the Basic Needs and Completion Fund Grants, a \$7.7 billion increase in investment to the CCDBG, a \$14 million increase to the OTP program, and for the Subcommittees to include the bipartisan, bicameral Promoting Advancement Through Transit Help (PATH) to College Act in the FY23 appropriations package.

Thank you for considering these requests. These important funding requests will ensure the childcare, higher education, and mental health needs of today's students are addressed so that more of today's students can attend and complete higher education programs. Please contact us if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Peller', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julie Peller