

September 24, 2019

Senator Richard Shelby
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United State Senate
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Roy Blount
Chair
Subcommittee on Department of Labor,
Health and Human Services,
and Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United State Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Department of Labor,
Health and Human Services,
and Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Shelby and Blount and Ranking Members Leahy and Murray,

On behalf of the associations listed below, representing college leaders, educators and professionals, we write offering our thoughts on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Labor-Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill recently released by the committee.

We are concerned that despite an overall increase of more than \$27 billion in non-defense discretionary spending for FY20, the allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education bill would provide an increase of \$223 million. This represents just a .1% increase over FY19 levels, the smallest percentage increase among Senate appropriations measures and well below inflation. This allocation level hampers your ability to adequately fund critical programs to make college accessible to low- and middle-income families, many of which remain at pre-recession levels. We fear that without additional changes to the allocation and the bill, student aid programs will fall farther behind the needs placed on them.

Given the allocation, we are grateful to the Committee for including a \$3 billion increase over FY19 for the National Institutes of Health. This investment will strengthen our capability to prevent, treat, and cure the most challenging health issues and will help to improve not just Americans' quality of life, but our global leadership in this area.

Similarly, we appreciate that the Committee continues to recognize the importance of Pell Grants in making college affordable and included an increase of \$135 to the maximum award, raising the overall award to \$6,330. As the cornerstone of federal financial aid, Pell Grants are the primary federal support to over seven million low-income students, and this increase is a welcome adjustment that will help Pell keep pace with inflation. However, we are deeply concerned that the bill includes a rescission of \$1.334 billion to funds previously provided by Congress for Pell, as well as no additional discretionary funding for the program. Using Pell Grant funding for other programs in the Labor-HHS-Education bill puts the future stability of the program in jeopardy. Events of the last decade have demonstrated the necessity of maintaining Pell funding and rescissions such as those included in this bill will dangerously weaken the program.

Finally, we had hoped to see additional increases provided for other key postsecondary programs such as Federal Work-Study, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, TRIO, GEAR UP, GAANN, Title VI and the Institute of Education Sciences in order to restore cuts to funding made in previous years. Given the allocation, we are appreciative of the fact that the bill appears to keep these programs at least level-funded, though these programs remain at pre-recession levels.

We thank you for the efforts made on behalf of medical research in this bill, and we strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to revisit the current allocation and provide sufficient resources to meet the critical funding needs that exist within the Labor-HHS-Education bill.

Thank you for your attention to these comments.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Graduate Schools
EDUCAUSE
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
UNCF