

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building, Washington,
DC, 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building, Washington,
DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you begin drafting the Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations bill, we write to express our continued support for prioritizing robust funding for **Federal Pell Grants** and the Campus-Based student financial aid programs: **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)** and **Federal Work-Study (FWS)**. Investing in college access and completion makes good economic sense for American taxpayers and our economic growth.

By 2031, more than 7 out of 10 jobs will require postsecondary education or training.¹ Typical earnings for bachelor's degree holders are 84 percent higher than those whose highest degree is a high school diploma, and college graduates on average make \$1.2 million more over their lifetime.² College graduates are half as likely to be unemployed as their peers who only have a high school degree.³

Pell Grants, SEOG, and FWS work together to ensure low-income and middle-income students can access and complete college, without overreliance on student loan debt. Over 50% of all postsecondary students are the first generation in their families to enter college (first gen) and utilize these programs.⁴

Federal Pell Grants are targeted to students with the most financial need. Pell Grants are the most successful means-tested federal program, as 78% of Pell Grant recipient families earn \$40,000 or less annually, and nearly half had income less than \$20,000.⁵ For many, Pell Grants make the difference between being able to afford college or not. More than six million low- and middle-income students receive a Pell Grant. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that Pell Grant recipients' higher wages and taxes after graduation caused the government to recoup the cost in just ten years.⁶

SEOG provides up to \$4,000 in grants to low- and middle-income students and funds programs that help at-risk students get into and stay in college. Providing these students with grant aid, rather than only providing the option of student loans, helps keep them in school and focused on reaching their full potential. Pell Grants and other need-based aid increase enrollment, persistence, and completion.⁷ SEOG provides important flexibility to institutions, allowing financial aid officers to target funds to support students who have experienced unexpected financial changes. SEOG is a critical tool to help students access college and persist on their path to a degree. SEOG served more than 1.6 million students in FY23.⁸ We request that Congress prioritize robust funding for SEOG.

¹ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/projections2031/>

² <https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2019/06/despite-rising-costs-college-is-still-a-good-investment/> ; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-REB-36351>

³ <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/fredgraph.png?g=Qlc3>

⁴ <https://firstgen.naspa.org/journal-and-research/national-data-fact-sheets-on-first-generation-college-students/7A515490-E6AA-11E9-BAEC0242AC100002>

⁵ https://www.nasfaa.org/issue_brief_double_pell

⁶ https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w23860/w23860.pdf

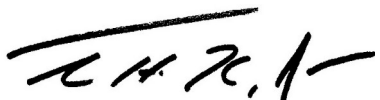
⁷ <https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/wp18-04-v201803.pdf>

⁸ <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget24/summary/24summary.pdf>

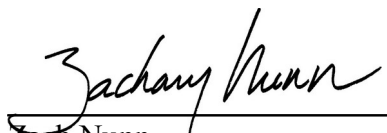
Federal Work-Study provides a wide variety of job opportunities that are mainly on campus for students to work to cover part of their tuition; however, students can also have an opportunity to work off campus as well in jobs that are of the public interest or as part of their degree. Having a work-study job on campus is a proven method of keeping low-income students engaged in their campus community while completing their degree on time, a fundamental goal of federal student aid. Students in work-study jobs have higher rates of persistence, degree completion, and employment after college than their peers.⁹ While 660,000 students earn Federal Work-Study,¹⁰ Congress provides enough funding for about 10% of first-time, full-time undergraduates to be able to participate. We request that Congress prioritize robust funding for FWS.

Thank you for considering this important federal funding request and for your continued leadership in supporting federal student aid programs. These programs help millions of students to access and afford a higher education that strengthens our local economy and global competitiveness.

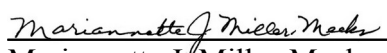
Sincerely,

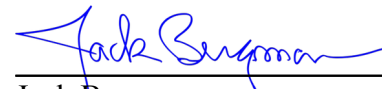

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 Christopher H. Smith
 Member of Congress

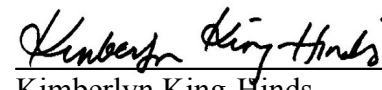

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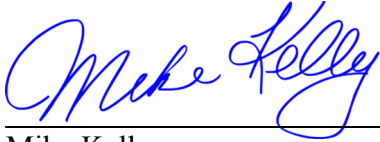

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⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272775715000825?via%3Dihub>

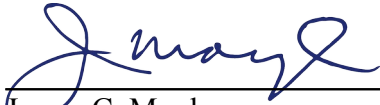
¹⁰ <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget24/summary/24summary.pdf>



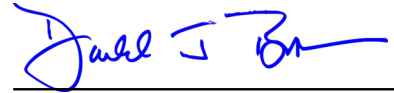
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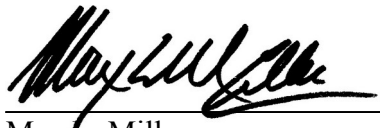
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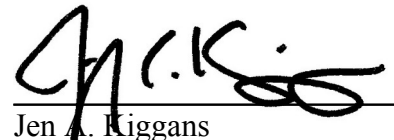
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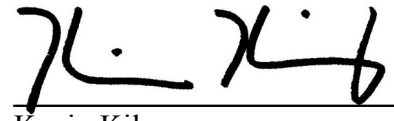
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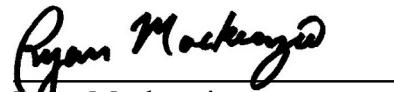
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