



Statement on the FY 2022 Government Funding Bill

March 29, 2022

After prolonged negotiations, Congress passed a long-awaited [bipartisan agreement](#) last week to fund the government through the remainder of fiscal year 2022.

“This funding bill makes crucial investments in students and provides badly-needed resources to address the growing crises of student basic needs insecurity and college affordability,” said [Bryce McKibben](#), Senior Director of Policy & Advocacy for the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. “At a time when [3 in 5 students](#) do not have enough to eat or a safe place to live, Congress delivered badly-needed resources to help students and families who have too often been denied or shut out of federal programs that should be there to help them succeed.”

On the heels of the [recent announcement](#) by the U.S Department of Education to provide additional pandemic relief funding to address students’ basic needs, the government funding bill passed this week includes several wins and steps forward to secure students’ basic needs. In particular, we are excited to see progress on some of our longtime priorities, including expanded student financial aid, funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), more funding for campus child care and basic needs grants, flexibility for colleges’ pandemic relief funding, and a deal to allow many of the financial aid reforms in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act to move forward in 2023. So, we present a list of the provisions within the spending package that we believe will add much-needed support for students.

Top 8 Wins in the FY22

1. FAFSA Simplification Act Implementation

The funding bill includes language allowing many of the reforms in the FAFSA Simplification Act that simplify the financial aid process to go online on-time (i.e., July 1, 2023), instead of being delayed by another year as the U.S. Department of Education works to bring this transformational law fully online. Students under 24 that often have a hard time qualifying as “independent” students due to their circumstances—including students not in contact with their parents, students experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth—will have an easier time qualifying for federal financial aid.

Colleges' estimates for the "cost of attendance" of students, and in particular the estimates they require for food, housing, and childcare will become more transparent and reliable for families. New opportunities for students to appeal their financial aid offer through "professional judgment" will also come online. Students who previously used up some or all Pell Grant eligibility at predatory, for-profit colleges will finally see that grant eligibility restored.

2. New Funding and Flexibility for Campus-Based Childcare

The funding bill provides \$65 million for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, an increase of \$10 million above the FY 2021 enacted level, which will help many [parenting students](#) juggling caregiving and academics. It also contains bill language that lifts the statutory cap on grant awards to institutions of higher education (previously capped at an amount equivalent to just 1% of an institution's yearly Pell Grant funds), to more accurately reflect the costs of providing high-quality, convenient childcare options for students. The explanatory report encourages the U.S. Department of Education to consider using a portion of these funds to increase the grants to current recipients and help them expand their services, consistent with removing the grant cap.

3. FIPSE Basic Needs & Postsecondary Success Grants

The funding bill provides \$8 million for the Basic Needs Grants program, an increase of \$3 million above the FY21 enacted level, which will allow more institutions to develop innovative programs to address student basic needs insecurity. At least 25% of these grants must go to community colleges and at least 25% must go to four-year [HBCUs](#), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other MSIs. Institutions with 25% or higher Pell Grant recipient enrollment will receive priority. Additionally, the bill provides \$5 million for a new Postsecondary Student Success Grants program to support evidence-based activities to improve postsecondary retention and completion rates. This new fund could be used to support evidence-based interventions to reduce basic needs insecurity. The notice inviting applications for these two grant programs will go out in the coming months.

4. New Funding and HEERF Flexibility for HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs

The funding bill provides \$885 million, an increase of \$96 million over the FY21 enacted level, to support HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs. Within this amount is a \$25 million increase for HBCUs, a \$34 million increase for HSIs, and a \$6 million increase for TCUs. The bill also provides flexibility for HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs with unspent Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) dollars to use such funds for the "acquisition of real property or construction directly related to preventing, preparing for, and responding to coronavirus." This language would likely allow for the construction of basic needs centers where students can get information about public benefits and financial resources as well as making major upgrades to historically underfunded facilities. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, TCUs, and MSIs currently have about \$2.7 billion in unspent COVID funds where they can apply this new spending flexibility.

5. Student Aid Increases

The funding bill increases the maximum Pell Grant to \$6,895, \$400 above the FY21 enacted level, which is the largest one-time increase in the maximum grant since 2009. While this represents a step forward, the declining purchasing power of the Pell Grant still means that students with low incomes are still less able to afford college than even a decade ago. The bill also includes \$895 million for the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program, an increase of \$15 million above FY21, and \$1.21 billion for Federal Work-Study (FWS), an increase of \$20 million above the FY21 enacted level. The increase in FWS funding may allow for more students to gain access to SNAP benefits if the public health emergency is in effect since students eligible for FWS can get access to SNAP, regardless of whether they are actually awarded funds or secure placements.

6. Funding to Support a White House Conference on Hunger

The funding bill includes \$2.5 million to support a conference convened in partnership between The White House, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, United States Department of Agriculture, and other federal agencies. A priority coming out of the September 2021 House Rules Committee hearing on college student hunger [at which The Hope Center testified](#). The bill requires the conference to produce a final report detailing findings and proposed solutions to end hunger and improve nutrition security in the United States by 2030.

7. Housing and Rental Support

The funding bill provides \$3.2 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants, an increase of \$213 million above FY21, and \$13.9 billion for Project-based Rental Assistance, for which students older than 24 and parenting students could be eligible. The bill also sets aside \$3 million for a housing counseling grant program fund for housing counseling agencies to partner with HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs.

8. Notable Earmarks to Help Students

For the first time in many years, “earmarks,” now known as Congressionally directed spending, are back in government funding bills. These investments help ensure the passage of the funding bill and can be used for a range of purposes, including to support students’ basic needs through institutions of higher education and non-profit organizations. Some notable earmarks and their sponsors include:

- \$700,000 for Austin Community College to help parenting students (Rep. Doggett),
- \$975,000 for Los Angeles City College for a “basic needs project” (Sen. Padilla and Rep. Schiff),
- \$450,000 for the University of California Los Angeles for “student basic needs services” (Sens. Padilla and Feinstein),

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- \$1,000,000 for Los Angeles Community College District to improve student access to transportation (Sen. Feinstein),
 - \$1,000,000 for the University of Utah to pilot a college access and degree completion initiative for young adults exiting the foster care system (Rep. Moore),
 - \$1,500,000 for Los Angeles Southwest College for student support services (Rep. Waters),
 - \$5,000,000 for Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College for college student housing (Sen. Baldwin), and
 - \$1,000,000 for Delaware County Community College for parenting students and early childhood education (Sen. Casey).

While we applaud the work of Congressional leaders for making these investments, there is substantial work ahead to build a higher education system and social safety net that truly reflects the experiences and needs of students. We look forward to working with Congress and the Biden Administration to build sustainable funding that meets the scale of the problem.

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