

April 21, 2022

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

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

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

The Honorable Tom Cole
U.S. House 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 develop a fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations bill for the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice requests investments in programs that will help students in higher education meet their basic needs. These basic needs including access to food, housing, child care, health care (including mental and behavioral health support), technology, and transportation. Our research shows that **three in five** students struggle to find enough to eat or a safe place to live, and historically marginalized students face much higher rates of basic needs insecurity.¹ We are grateful for Congress' recent investments in programs to support students' basic needs in FY 2022 and urge your subcommittees to build on this progress this year.

The Hope Center is an action-research organization focused on college affordability, and particularly the non-tuition costs facing students in higher education that can have a substantial impact on their ability to succeed. In recognition that "students are humans first," our organization works to open the doors to a college degree or credential by ensuring that students' basic needs are met. Several federal grant programs play a key role in helping to ensure that students receive the financial resources and support they need to be academically successful.

Higher education continues to recover slowly from the devastating impact of the pandemic. Undergraduate enrollment remains down by more than one million students compared to pre-pandemic levels.² Even with colleges and universities back to in-person and hybrid instruction, students face significant increases in the cost of living, a different campus life, and the lingering mental health impacts of social isolation. As a result of these factors and others, students need more support to navigate and succeed in higher education. Unfortunately, crucial emergency funding provided by Congress to students and institutions is beginning to run out; funding for emergency financial grants is now more than 90 percent obligated.³ The expiration of this funding will create a significant "cliff effect" for students when they continue to need significant help and support. Without statutory budget caps for FY 2023, we hope that your subcommittees will receive a generous allocation this year and that funding for higher education programs will be a significant priority. We are pleased to address several programmatic needs for students in higher education.

¹ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2021). [#RealCollege 2021: Basic needs insecurity during the ongoing pandemic.](#)

² National Student Clearinghouse. (2022). [Current term enrollment estimates.](#)

³ Weekly spend-down information provided to Congress by the U.S. Department of Education.

We appreciate investments in the highly competitive **Basic Needs Grant** program, first funded in FY 2021, which announced the first six recipients in January 2022. This program funds systemic interventions to support basic needs insecurity, such as informing students about existing public benefits programs for which they may be eligible, providing case management to help students enroll in such public benefits, surveying the needs of students on campus, and providing direct services like affordable food and housing. In recognition of the significant national demand, we ask the subcommittees to quadruple funding for this program to **\$32 million**. While there are several worthwhile programs within the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the Basic Needs Grant program serves the widest scope of students; it should be the largest program within FIPSE. We also urge you to include language that will elevate this program's focus on systemic solutions to address students' basic needs insecurity, like leveraging other public benefits for students.

Additionally, we support historic increases to the **Child Care Access Means Parents in School** (CCAMPIS) program to meet the growing needs of parenting students, who are disproportionately likely to experience basic needs insecurity, to **\$500 million**. This amount will provide child care support to approximately 6 percent of Pell-eligible student parents of children ages 0-5, and result in approximately 100,000 new parenting students being able to participate in the program. Nearly 4 million college students are parents of dependent children, representing more than one in five undergraduates in the United States. However, according to the Hope Center's recent survey of roughly 23,000 parenting students, 70 percent of respondents reported that their child care arrangement was unaffordable.⁴ Therefore, a much more significant investment in this program is warranted. We also appreciate the language you included on the FY 2022 omnibus that waived the maximum grant cap in the CCAMPIS program. As a result of this policy change, and students having returned to in-person instruction since last fall, we expect a significant increase in demand for on-campus child care services in FY23. Larger CCAMPIS grants will make the program much more economically viable for under-resourced colleges, including community colleges, HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs. Many more of their students stand to benefit. We also urge your subcommittees to maintain language in the appropriations bill that waives the CCAMPIS maximum grant cap.

We also ask the subcommittees to increase funding for the **Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant**, the only federal program currently available to directly support college students' mental and behavioral health services. Rates of mental health concerns, crises, and diagnoses among college students have grown substantially over the past few decades. The National College Health Assessment finds that rates of students reporting being diagnosed with depression have increased by almost 250% between 2000 and 2019, but funding has not kept pace with this increase.⁵ The nationally-recognized Healthy Minds Study finds that nearly half of all college students (47 percent) are struggling with clinically-significant anxiety or depression, but only 40 percent of those students have had any mental health counseling or therapy in the past year.⁶ We recently joined nearly 100 organizations in calling for Congress to invest in the GLS campus grant and the mental health of college students.⁷ We request that you equalize funding between the GLS campus grants and the GLS youth grants to states, which totaled **\$38.8 million** in the FY 2022 bill.

The Hope Center also joins the higher education community in requesting support for critical student financial aid programs, including the **campus-based aid programs**: Supplemental Educational

⁴ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2020). [Parenting While In College: Basic Needs Insecurity Among Students With Children](#).

⁵ National College Health Assessment, American College Health Association, 2000-2019.

⁶ McAlpine, Kat. The Brink. (February 2021). [Depression, Anxiety, Loneliness Are Peaking in College Students](#).

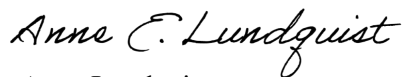
⁷ Coalition letter advocating for support for college students mental health. (April 13, 2022). <https://hope4college.com/coalition-letter-to-congress-advocating-for-support-for-college-students-mental-health>

Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS). SEOG not only provides need-based grant aid of up to \$4,000 per student to 1.6 million students, but matching funds from colleges help the program go even further. The FWS program provides federal and institutional funding to support employment for more than 700,000 students annually. We greatly appreciate the recent increase in funding for both programs. We request an inflationary adjustment to ensure students can afford rising living costs, to **\$1.09 billion** for SEOG and **\$1.52 billion** for FWS, respectively. The campus-based aid programs also continue to operate flexibly under the *CARES Act*, allowing campuses to use their SEOG as emergency aid and for FWS to be transferred into SEOG if work-study positions are not available. We urge the Committee to include language in the bill that allows these programs to continue to operate with such flexibility even if the public health or national emergency declarations are ended this year, including permitting campus-based aid to be used as emergency aid grants.

Finally, as you review the **community project funding** requests from Members, we urge you to prioritize initiatives that help improve the basic needs security of students in higher education. At least eight such basic needs investments were included in the FY 2022 bill, which will greatly serve the needs of students at those campuses and systems.⁸ Community projects that support students' basic needs produce a significant return on investment by improving student success. We support the continued use of community project funding to drive additional dollars to high-value public and nonprofit projects in higher education that support students.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests to support students' basic needs, college affordability, and academic success.

Sincerely,



Anne Lundquist
Interim Director, The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice

⁸ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2022). [*Statement on the FY22 Government Funding Bill*](#).