

March 23, 2023

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

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
U.S. Senate Labor, HHS, Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
U.S. House Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
U.S. House Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you develop a fiscal year (FY) 2024 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 (“The Hope Center”) asks you to invest in helping students in higher education meet their basic needs. These basic needs include food, housing, child care, health care (including mental and behavioral health), internet connectivity, transportation, and other non-tuition expenses essential for students to succeed. Our research shows that **three in five** students struggle to find enough to eat or a safe and stable place to live, and systemically marginalized students face much higher rates of basic needs insecurity.¹ Meeting students’ basic needs helps them complete a college degree or credential, obtain family-supporting jobs, become economically mobile, and contribute to civic life.

Students and families are still recovering from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and face considerable challenges due to rising costs of living and basic necessities. College prices are also beginning to rise again. Undergraduate enrollment remains down by more than one million students compared to pre-pandemic levels,² and many of the supports provided by Congress during the height of the pandemic to help students weather emergencies, afford food, or stay healthy have been exhausted or expired. For example, funding for emergency financial grants through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) is now spent,³ additional monthly benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) expired in March of this year,⁴ and exemptions that allowed more food-insecure college students to access SNAP will end in the coming weeks.⁵ We request several programmatic increases that can help forestall an expanding crisis of student basic needs insecurity.

We appreciate recent investments in the highly competitive **Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Grant (“Basic Needs Grants”)** program, which announced its latest round of 14 grantees this year and will soon commence its third competition thanks to the funding Congress provided in FY 2023. 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. Given the challenges facing students and institutions, there is significant national demand for this funding. Out of 110 eligible applicants this past year, only 14

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

² National Student Clearinghouse. (2023). [Current term enrollment estimates.](#)

³ Weekly spend-down information provided to Congress by the U.S. Department of Education as of February 2023.

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture (2023). [SNAP Emergency Allotments are Ending.](#)

⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture (2023). [SNAP – Expiration of Program Flexibilities for the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.](#)

institutions received funding under this grant program. Therefore, we ask the subcommittees to quadruple funding for Basic Needs Grants to **\$40 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 and it should be among the largest programs within FIPSE. We thank you for including explanatory statement language in the FY 2023 bill to improve the program’s focus on systemic solutions to address students’ basic needs insecurity, such as leveraging public benefits. For these reasons, we also strongly support the concepts embedded in the U.S. Department of Education’s FY 2024 request for a “Systemwide Holistic Student Supports” program, including making state agencies and systems of IHEs eligible for funding to address students’ basic needs more comprehensively.

Additionally, we ask you to continue making substantial increases to the **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)** program to address high levels of unmet need for child care among parenting students, who are disproportionately likely to experience basic needs insecurity. We ask you to increase CCAMPIS funding to **\$500 million** to provide child care support to approximately 6 percent of Pell-eligible student parents of children ages 0 to 5, resulting in approximately 100,000 new parenting students being able to participate in the program. More than five million college students are parents of dependent children, representing more than one in five undergraduates and nearly one in three graduate students.⁶ 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.⁷ In addition, the share of colleges with on-campus child care has declined over the past two decades, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸ CCAMPIS remains the only program dedicated to campus childcare, and a much more significant investment is warranted. We appreciate the increase for CCAMPIS in the FY2023 funding bill and the explanatory statement language you included in the FY 2022 and FY 2023 bills waiving the maximum grant cap. Larger CCAMPIS grants will make the program much more economically viable for under-resourced colleges and we urge your subcommittees to maintain this bill report language.

We also ask the subcommittees to substantially increase funding for the **Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant**, the only federal program directly supporting college students’ mental and behavioral health needs. Rates of mental health concerns, crises, and diagnoses among college students have grown substantially over the past few decades and surveys show that mental health concerns among college students have grown even more severe in the wake of the pandemic.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ We recently joined nearly 100 organizations in calling for Congress to invest in the GLS campus grant and the mental health of college students.¹² We request that you equalize funding between the GLS campus grants and the GLS youth grants to states, which totaled **\$43.8 million** in the FY 2023 bill, and include bill language that would remove onerous match requirements that discourage community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, and other Minority-Serving Institutions from participating in the GLS program. We also strongly support the U.S. Department of

⁶ Urban Institute. (2022, December). [Roadmap for Change to Support Pregnant and Parenting Students](#).

⁷ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2020). [Parenting While In College: Basic Needs Insecurity Among Students With Children](#).

⁸ <https://hope.temple.edu/newsroom/hope-blog/congress-needs-address-child-care-crisis-parenting-students-heres-how>

⁹ Lumina Foundation. (2022, April 22). [Stress weighs heavily on those who remain in college, a new Gallup-Lumina study finds](#).

¹⁰ National College Health Assessment, American College Health Association, 2000-2019.

¹¹ McAlpine, Kat. The Brink. (February 2021). [Depression, Anxiety, Loneliness Are Peaking in College Students](#).

¹² See [coalition letter](#) advocating for support for college students’ mental health. (2022, April 13).

Education FY 2024 request for a \$150 million School- and Campus-Based Mental Health Service program in FIPSE, which would also be targeted toward under-resourced institutions. We encourage your subcommittees to consider ways to encourage greater interagency collaboration and outreach to increase institutional applications for federal mental health resources.

The Hope Center also joins the higher education community in requesting support and continued flexibility for critical student financial aid programs, including the **campus-based aid programs**: Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS). SEOG not only provides need-based grant aid of up to \$4,000 per student to 1.8 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 nearly 400,000 students annually and over 600,000 before the pandemic. Unlike the subcommittee’s laudable increases to the maximum Pell Grant, the purchasing power of SEOG and FWS has continued to fall as investments have failed to keep pace with inflation or the growth in college costs. We request **increases for SEOG and FWS of no less than the rate of inflation**. The campus-based aid programs also face expiring authority to operate flexibly under *CARES Act* provisions, such as allowing campuses to use their SEOG as emergency aid and to transfer FWS into SEOG if work-study positions are not available. Given the continued need for emergency aid and the desire to reduce regulatory burdens on institutions, we urge your subcommittees to include bill language that allows these programs to continue to operate with needed flexibility. This language will help to continue the highly successful and bipartisan investment in federal emergency aid.

We also ask your subcommittees to provide all essential funding, support, and oversight necessary to swiftly implement the FUTURE Act and FAFSA Simplification Act – a once-in-a-generation overhaul of the federal financial aid system that removes barriers to financial aid for students who are most at risk of basic needs insecurity. To robustly implement these landmark laws and other ongoing efforts to improve customer service for students, their families, and borrowers, we support the Administration’s request for \$2.65 billion for Student Aid Administration.

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 ten such basic needs investments were included in the FY 2023 bill.¹³ Community projects that support students’ basic needs produce a significant return on investment by improving student success and workforce development.

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

Sincerely,



Dr. Anne E. Lundquist
Director and Assistant Professor
The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice

¹³ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2022). [Statement on the Fiscal Year 2023 Government Funding Omnibus](#).