

April 17, 2025

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

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

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

As you construct the fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations bill for the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, **The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs** requests that you invest in critical federal grant and student aid programs that help students in higher education meet their basic needs, including food, housing, physical and mental health care, child care, hygiene, and transportation.

The Hope Center is a research center focused on finding solutions to the challenge of college affordability, particularly the substantial *non-tuition* costs that students must be able to afford to succeed in and out of the classroom. Students today are much more likely to support themselves financially than they once were, often while working and raising a family of their own. Their struggles to afford living costs are referred to as “basic needs insecurity,” and the data reveal a growing crisis.

Our research shows that **three in five students** do not have enough to eat or a safe place to live.¹ Federal data indicate that undergraduate students experience food insecurity at twice the rate of all other U.S. households.² One in ten students experiences homelessness. While public and tax benefits could help many students with living costs, uptake of benefits is exceedingly low due to program complexity and funding limitations, and campus-level and federal and state agency outreach efforts are still in their infancy. Basic needs insecurity is a pervasive and urgent barrier for students to be able to successfully enroll in and complete higher education and enter the workforce with a family-sustaining wage.

Given these urgent needs, we hope your subcommittees will protect and increase investments in several federal grant programs that play a crucial role in helping to ensure that students receive the financial resources and support they need to be academically successful:

- First, we ask that you allocate **\$45 million** to the **Basic Needs Grant** program within the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). This highly competitive program is the only federal investment supporting systemic interventions to address and prevent student basic needs insecurity, such as connecting students with public and tax benefits to help them solve

¹ [The Hope Center 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report](#). (February 26, 2025). The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University.

² During 2019-20, when federal data were collected, undergraduate food insecurity was 23%, while the rate among all U.S. households for the same year was 10.5%. Sources: McKibben, B., Wu, J., and Abelson, S. (2023, August). [New Federal Data Confirm that College Students Face Significant—and Unacceptable—Basic Needs Insecurity](#). The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs; U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2023, October). [Household Food Security in the United States in 2020](#).

recurring challenges affording their non-tuition costs. Demand and need for the program is high; the program was only able to fund 13 percent of eligible applicants in the previous funding cycle, and all winners had a perfect score. Still, at least 17 states and Puerto Rico have institutions that have received funding since FY 2021. We also urge you to maintain the report language for the program included in prior committee marks and add report language supporting a new competition in FY 2026.

- We support increasing the **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)** program to **\$500 million**. While this would be a substantial increase, the current level of investment in the CCAMPIS program is vastly insufficient to meet the scale of need among parenting students. More than four million college students are parents of dependent children, representing one in five undergraduates and nearly one in three graduate students. These students need child care that is convenient to where they work and go to school. Despite growing demand, the share of colleges with on-campus child care has actually declined over the past two decades.³ New funding could reverse this troubling trend. We also ask you to maintain the bill language from FY 2022 that waives the maximum grant cap in the CCAMPIS program to make on-campus child care economically viable for under-resourced colleges, including community colleges, HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs.
- We also ask the subcommittee to substantially increase funding for **the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Grant** in SAMSHA, the only federal program directly supporting college students' mental and behavioral health services. The program is vastly underfunded compared to widespread student need. The nationally recognized Healthy Minds Study finds that four in ten college students (41 percent) are struggling with depression, and another one in three (36 percent) have an anxiety disorder. However, 41% of those students have not had any mental health treatment in the past year.⁴ The Hope Center's Student Basic Needs survey also found that more than half of students (57%) who had previously stopped out of college reported doing so because of mental health issues.⁵ Mental health programs for K-12 students have received significant new funding in recent years, but the crisis of mental health in higher education has gone largely unaddressed. We request that you equalize funding between the GLS campus grants and the youth grants to states, which totaled **\$43.8 million** under the FY 2025 annualized CR level. Additionally, we appreciate the report language from the FY 2025 House committee mark acknowledging the need to prioritize grants and waive matching fund requirements to community colleges, HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs, where mental health needs are significant but resources are scarce. We request that report language be included this year.
- The Hope Center also joins the higher education community in requesting that you provide funding to avoid any cuts to award levels or reductions in eligibility for the **Pell Grant** program.⁶ We are extremely concerned about the potential harm of a likely shortfall in the program this year.⁷ More than a decade ago, shortsighted cuts to student aid eligibility to backfill a gap in Pell Grant funding had a devastating impact on student success and disproportionately harmed hundreds of thousands of underserved students (for example, taking away year-round Pell Grants

³ Huelsman, M. (2024, September 19). *It's Time for Congress to Meet the Needs of Parenting Students* The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs.

⁴ Healthy Minds Network. (2023). *Health Minds Study 2022-2023 Data Report*.

⁵ The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University (2025).

⁶ *Community letter on the Pell Grant*. (2025, February).

⁷ Committee for a Responsible Fiscal Budget. (2025, February). *Pell Grant Program Is In Serious Trouble*.

and imposing arbitrary time limits on those grants).⁸ Reducing lifetime Pell Grant eligibility reduced student enrollment and academic performance.⁹ Potential further cuts to Pell will undermine student success at a time when the share of college costs covered by the maximum Pell Grant is at an all-time low, and the program has grown more complex for students; the max grant now covers just 26% of the average cost of attending an in-state public four-year college. We ask the subcommittee to prioritize current eligibility and award levels, coordinate with authorizers to add additional mandatory funding, and advocate for higher allocations to LHHS-ED, in its effort to stabilize the Pell Grant program this year.

- We also support investments to help the campus-based aid programs—**Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)** and **Federal Work-Study (FWS)**—better maintain their purchasing power for students and families. These programs have not been adjusted for inflation despite rising costs of living. Like the Student Aid Alliance, we ask for at least **\$996.26 billion for SEOG** and **\$1.31 billion for FWS**, respectively, to cover inflation since FY 2023.¹⁰ We additionally ask that the subcommittee include bill language restoring the ability for colleges to operate SEOG as emergency aid that helps students afford unexpected expenses.¹¹ Restoring this flexibility will help limited SEOG dollars go further for students and help colleges and financial aid offices respond to changing circumstances, including natural disasters or community emergencies, to keep students enrolled.
- Finally, we ask that you provide robust funding for **Student Aid Administration (SAA)** to ensure the smooth and timely operation of financial aid processes, including the FAFSA and customer support operations. Any delays in the award and delivery of student aid can exacerbate basic needs insecurity by making it more difficult for students to pay rent, buy groceries, and get to class. Recent Administration actions to cut more than 320 personnel at Federal Student Aid, including vendor performance and oversight staff, put the entire operation of federal financial aid in serious jeopardy. We encourage the subcommittee to include bill and report language to reverse these personnel cuts. Funding for SAA should be at least maintained at the FY 2024 enacted (and FY 2025 annualized) level of **\$2.06 billion**.

Thank you for considering these important requests to support students' basic needs, college affordability, and academic success. We look forward to working with you to help students reach their full potential. Please don't hesitate to reach out at anne.lundquist@temple.edu if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Anne Lundquist
Director
The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs

⁸ Adams, C. (2012, January). *Budget Deal Ushers in New Pell Grant Eligibility Rules*. *Education Week*.

⁹ Sparks, D. (2025, March). *To Give or to Take: Exploring Effects of Reductions in Pell Lifetime Eligibility*. *The Journal of Higher Education*.

¹⁰ Student Aid Alliance. (2025, March 19). *Student Aid Alliance FY26 Funding Request*.

¹¹ McKibben, B. (2023, August). *Making College Financial Aid Flexible and Responsive: The Case for Continuing the Federal Investment in Emergency Aid Grants*. The Hope Center at Temple University.; Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020, January). *A New Course for Higher Education*.; Davis, R. & Duke-Benfield, A.E. (2023). *College Emergency Aid: The Safety Net that Proves Its Value for Today's Students*. Today's Students Coalition.