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The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chairwoman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, &  
Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, &  
Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, &  
Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, &  
Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Moore Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, Chairman Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The following 16 organizations respectfully request that Congress invest in the following critical programs within the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill that support students' affordability, basic needs, and success. Higher education plays an integral role in building a robust workforce and ensuring family financial stability, and federal investments must continue to enhance the capacities of postsecondary institutions while ensuring student access to the supports necessary for success in higher education, especially at a time of rising costs and economic uncertainty.

In particular, we encourage you to fund the following in the critical student supports, basic needs, child care, financial aid, and campus mental health programs outlined below. In addition to robustly funding critical student supports, we urge Congress to clarify in bill language that funds must be used for the specific programs and purposes as intended and not cloak other competing priorities under the umbrella of these grants.

- **Fund the Pell Shortfall:** Pell Grants have served as the cornerstone of federal financial aid for students from low-income backgrounds, providing crucial support for roughly 7 million students each year. We urge Congress to preserve Pell Grant funding in the Appropriations process, ensuring the most at risk students are able to receive access to this money and finish their education. Congress should provide sufficient funding to cover the shortfall and increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$200 without any changes to eligibility in FY27. This would be an increase that aligns with costs associated with inflation.
- **Emergency Aid Grants:** Emergency financial aid grants can help students cover unexpected expenses and ensure these obstacles do not suspend or halt their education.

Emergency financial situations such as an unexpected car repair, a high electricity bill, or having to miss work due to illness can force students to have to decide between staying in school or dropping out to pay for this unexpected expense. Evidence from three rounds of emergency aid funding shows that [students use](#) emergency grants to cover essential expenses like housing, food, technology, transportation, medical care, and more, helping millions persist. Proving that relatively small amounts of emergency aid, delivered in a timely manner can ensure students have a chance to stay in school.

To that end, we support the creation of a **permanent Emergency Aid Grant program** to help ensure an unanticipated financial situation does not derail a student's ability to stay enrolled in classes and complete their higher education goals. We also encourage appropriators to revive flexibilities within the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG) program that allowed a portion of vital campus-based aid funding to be deployed as emergency aid.

- **Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE):** FIPSE grants, such as the *Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students*, the *Postsecondary Student Success* program, *Veterans Center for Excellence*, and *Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development* programs help provide critical support to students, including those that have recently stopped out, to help them stay enrolled and complete their higher education goals. These grants provide resources to institutions of higher education to increase mental health support, support basic needs, and help connect students to public basic needs support, and are essential to building models of success that institutions across the country can develop to better serve students.
- **Child Care Access Means Parents in School:** The *Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools* (CCAMPIS) program provides vital support for the participation and success of student parents from low-income backgrounds in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based child care. Nearly four million college students in the United States are parents of dependent children, representing [more than one in five undergraduates](#), and more than 1 in 4 Pell Grant recipients. These students face substantial additional costs, as well as time burdens, that can keep them from persisting through their educational program, and students are often unable to access federal and state child care programs.

Therefore, we ask that Congress increase funding to \$500 million for CCAMPIS, which would ensure that roughly 100,000 more parenting college students receive the child care assistance they need to continue their educational journeys. Additionally, we also ask you to include language in the bill that clearly articulates that the money “shall be used as articulated/intended by Congress” to ensure the funds are not directed to other competing priorities.

- **Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Memorial Act Campus Suicide Prevention Grant:** In June 2020, [data from the CDC](#) showed that more than half of adults aged 18-24 had at least one adverse mental or behavioral health symptom, with more than a quarter considering suicide in the past 30 days. Those trends have worsened, with data indicating that [39% of](#)

[college students had experienced a significant mental health issue](#) during their enrollment and additional [surveys showing that 83% of students](#) stating their mental health had negatively impacted their academic performance within the past month. In fact, [more than half of students](#) (57%) who had previously stopped out of college reported doing so because of a mental health issue. The prevalence of students' mental health issues is outpacing the number of students finding and receiving support.

The *Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant* (GLS CSPG) is currently the only federal program solely dedicated to campus mental health. While we are thankful for a recent increase in funding for this grant, it is still severely underfunded relative to the ongoing need. Increasing GLS CSPG funding to \$20 million will help more institutions of higher education counteract this ongoing epidemic, and move it closer to parity with the current funding under the GLS program for K-12 schools. The GLS CSPG provides vital funding in colleges' efforts to address the unique needs of students experiencing mental health challenges or contemplating suicide, consequently supporting them in reaching their academic goals.

As you consider programmatic funding levels for FY 2027 appropriations, we urge you to reaffirm Congress's historic, bipartisan commitment to postsecondary education and today's students. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continued work with you to advance programmatic funding that meets the needs of our students and the nation as a whole.

Sincerely,

Today's Students Coalition

America Forward

Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice at SNHU

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

Excelencia in Education

FirstGen Forward

Institute for Higher Education Policy

LeadMN

UAspire

University of California Student Association

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

National College Attainment Network

New America Higher Education Policy Program

Student Veterans of America

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs

The JED Foundation