

November 10, 2020

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy,

As negotiations continue on another stimulus package, we strongly urge you to explicitly include substantial funding for emergency aid grants to keep students connected to their college education and on the road to economic recovery. The CARES Act offered a bold start; that \$6B investment helped more students graduate last spring, and kept others safe in their homes and connected to their coursework. But the latest data show that overall undergraduate enrollment is down 4%, and first-time enrollment is down 22% at community colleges.¹ This is a major threat to communities across the country, and particularly to parents and other workers in need of retraining so they are able to access the 65% of jobs that require at least some college education.²

Inequitable funding for higher education and financial aid contributed to widespread food and housing insecurity among undergraduates even before the pandemic struck.³ Widespread unemployment, poor health conditions, and the disruption of K-12 schooling due to COVID-19 is putting even more college students at risk-- including the nearly 1 in 4 with a child of their own.⁴ Recent research from a survey completed at the onset of the pandemic revealed that two-thirds of students who'd previously been employed were experiencing reduced wages and even total job loss. More than 60% of those students were experiencing food and/or housing insecurity.⁵

Emergency aid is a critical college retention tool; one that Congress needs to deploy immediately in order to support the millions of adults whose education is now at risk. The dollars distributed by emergency grant programs can be used flexibly to meet students' most pressing

¹Monthly Update on Higher Education Enrollment, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, [COVID-19: Stay Informed](#). (2020, October 15)

²Carnevale, A. P., Jayasundera, T., & Gulish, A. (2016). [America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots](#). George Washington University Center on Education and the Workforce.

³Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., Goldrick-Rab, S., Looker, E., Richardson, B., & Williams, T. (2020, February). [#RealCollege 2020: Five Years of Evidence on Campus Basic Needs Insecurity](#). The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice

⁴Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., Goldrick-Rab, S., Looker, E., Richardson, B., & Williams, T. (2020, February).

⁵Gold-Rab, S., Coca, V., Kienzl, G., Welton, C., Dahl, S., Magnelia, S. (2020). [#RealCollege During the Pandemic: New Evidence on Basic Needs Insecurity and Student Wellbeing](#). The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice.

needs and achieve their goals. Rigorous studies, including randomized controlled trials conducted around the world, indicate that cash transfers are the most effective anti-poverty tools.⁶ In its next investment in emergency aid, Congress should be certain that dollars flow to students whose odds of completion are most increased by support. To accomplish this we urge you to ensure that:

1. The institutional allocation formula values the education of part-time students along with full-time students, rather than offering them less support. This requires a focus on using student headcount, not merely full-time equivalents, for the purpose of emergency aid allocation.⁷
2. The eligibility requirements should not require FAFSA completion (which would further exclude undocumented students, students estranged from their families, and those who do not have access to FAFSA forms).
3. Funding should be available to students who must now attend all of their classes online, given that this has become many students' only option during the pandemic.

Congressional support of college student success is critical for individuals, their families, and for the nation's economic recovery. People without college degrees experienced the most harm during the Great Recession and still have not experienced the same recovery that college degree holders did. Now, tens of thousands of college students are facing the same predicament.

Higher education has provided generations of Americans with access to a better life while increasing the economic vitality of the nation. Millions are in danger of losing those opportunities—or of being able to access them only by incurring crippling debt. To renew the country's economic life, we must restore the vitality of higher education and ensure equitable access for all students. An immediate investment in emergency aid is a critical starting point.

Sincerely,

12 Plus

Achieving the Dream

Amarillo College

AMC Consulting

American Association of Community Colleges

American Federation of Teachers Local 1904

Milwaukee Area Technical College, American Federation of Teachers Local 212

American Indian College Fund

Association of Community College Trustees

⁶Bastagli, F., Hagen-Zanker, J., Harman, L., Sturge, G., Barca, V., Schmidt, T., & Pellerano, L. [Cash transfers: What does the evidence say? A rigorous review of impacts and the role of design and implementation features](#). The Overseas Development Institute. (2016, July 01).

⁷Miller, B. [A Better Formula for Higher Education's Federal Coronavirus Funding](#). Center for American Progress. (2020, May 11)

Believe in Students
Beyond College Access LLC
BlackFem, Inc.
Bossier Parish Community College
Brandeis Graduate Student Association
Bunker Hill Community College
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
California Institute of Technology Graduate Student Council
Campus Philly
Carnegie Mellon University Graduate Student Assembly
Center for the Study of Higher Education
Challah for Hunger
Chemeketa Community College
College Forward
College Futures Foundation
Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University
Complete College America
Compton College
Cypress College
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
Dallas College
Digital Pedagogy Lab
Dillard University
ED2WORK
Edquity
Everett Community College
FLIP National
Generation Hope
University of Southern California Graduate Student Government
Grayson College
Harrisburg Area Community College
Higher Learning Advocates
Highline College Foundation
Hildreth Institute
Hybrid Pedagogy
Institute for Women's Policy Research
Inversant
Jobs for the Future
Juvenile Law Center
Last Mile Education Fund
LeadMN - College Students Connecting for Change
Louisiana Budget Project
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges
Moore College of Art & Design

Mt. Hood Community College
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
National College Attainment Network
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
National Skills Coalition
New America Higher Education Program
Norco College
Odessa College
Ohlone College
Philadelphia Futures
Pioneer Charter School Of Science
Plymouth State University
Portland Community College
Project GRAD Houston
Project Self-Sufficiency
Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts
Rise
Rogue Community College
San - Jose Evergreen Community College District
San Diego Mesa College
SchoolHouse Connection
Share Food Program
Social Workers for Equity and Leadership
Souls To The Pouls
Southern California College Access Network
Southwestern College
Student-Ready Strategies
Swipe Out Hunger
Tarrant County College
Temple Association of University Professionals, American Federation of Teachers Local 4531
The Activist History Review
The Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation
The Education Trust
The Georgetown Scholars Program
The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)
The MAGIC Charities Foundation
The Michelson 20 Million Minds Foundation
The Pittsburgh Promise
The Turn Around Place
Treasure Valley Community College
Trellis Foundation
Trinity Washington University
Turning Points for Children

U.S. Public Interest Research Group

uAspire

United Academics, American Association of University Professors, American Federation of Teachers Local 4996

United Way of King County

University Innovation Alliance

University of Miami Graduate Student Association

Western Center on Law and Poverty

Young Invincibles