



March 5, 2021

California Congressional Delegation
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of Congress,

As the official representatives of California's students, higher education segments, and the state Student Aid Commission, we are writing to urge you and your colleagues to prioritize doubling the maximum award of the Pell Grant, the largest and most important federal financial aid investment in our students.

Each year Pell Grants help over seven million low-income students afford college. Pell Grants boost college enrollment, reduce drop-out rates, and improve student outcomes. However, despite their proven success, Pell Grants now cover a smaller and continuously shrinking share of college costs for students. Nearly 50 years ago, the Pell Grant covered more than 75 percent of a student's total cost of attendance for a public four-year institution; over time, continued disinvestment in higher education and the Pell Grant award's inability to keep up with inflation has eroded its purchasing power to the point that it now only covers 28 percent of those costs. If bold action is not taken to meaningfully increase the maximum award, the Pell Grant's continued impact in making higher education more accessible and affordable will be jeopardized.

The COVID-19 health crisis only exacerbated the financial strain faced by so many of today's college students. Students were already struggling to cover the costs of food, housing, transportation, and childcare before the health crisis caused campus closures and student displacement.¹ We understand and appreciate the many competing demands on federal resources at the current time. Doubling the maximum Pell Grant award, however, positions the nation to address the student basic needs crisis and meet long-term workforce

¹ COVID-19 Student Survey, California Student Aid Commission (2020): <https://www.csac.ca.gov/survey2020>

needs to build back a stronger economy. Investing in college affordability will support individuals in gaining the skills that they need for the 21st century.

We call on Congress to double the Pell Grant, so it reaches a maximum award of \$13,000. This will make college more affordable and give students the support they need to succeed. Today's college students will be crucial to our nation's economic recovery in the years to come.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and service on behalf of California. If you have questions, please contact the California Student Aid Commission's Legislative Analyst, Melissa Bardo at Melissa.Bardo@csac.ca.gov and (916) 844- 4609 or the UCSA Government Relations Director, Parshan Khosravi at govrelations@ucsa.org and (916)442-8280.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director
California Student Aid Commission



Aidan Arasasingham
President
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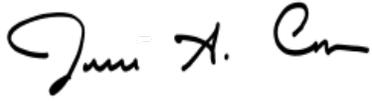
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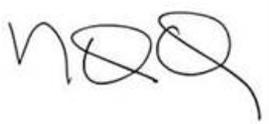
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Assemblymember Marie Waldron, Minority Leader, California State Assembly