
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

January 9, 2026

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

The following 25 organizations, institutions, and advocates respectfully request that Congress invest in the following critical programs within the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 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.

- **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. *We encourage lawmakers to increase FIPSE funding, and make clear that the Administration must fund and implement programs as articulated, rather than shifting funding to other competing priorities not intended by*

Congress.

- **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.

- **Pell Grants:** 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 you and your colleagues to support a significant increase in the maximum Pell Grant award in both discretionary and mandatory funding, and avoid any cuts to annual or lifetime eligibility.
- **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, and is 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 \$43.8M 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 2026 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,

The Today's Students Coalition
The Hope Center for Students Basic Needs
10,000 Degrees
Achieve Atlanta
Alray Scholars Program
BLU Educational Foundation
Breakthrough Central Texas
Capital Area College Access Network
Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice at SNHU
Education Forward Arizona
FirstGen Forward
GRASP (Great Aspirations Scholarship Program)
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

John Burton Advocates for Youth
Knox Education Foundation
LeadMN
Los Angeles United Methodist Urban Foundation
Michigan College Access Network
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National College Attainment Network
New America Higher Education Program
Southern California College Attainment Network
The JED Foundation
UAspire
University of California Student Association