

April 5, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Labor, HHS, Education and Related  
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Labor, HHS Education and Related  
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Labor, HHS, Education and Related  
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Labor, HHS Education and Related  
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee  
Washington, DC 20515

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

As you work on the fiscal year (FY) 2024 appropriations legislation, Higher Learning Advocates would like to express our support for investments in crucial child care, higher education, and campus mental health programs. Specifically, we urge the inclusion of an increase to the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) program, \$20 million for the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant to address growing campus suicide prevention and mental health needs, and language to support the funding of the Path to College Act. We also strongly urge the Subcommittees to provide sufficient funding that would allow the maximum Pell Grant to move closer to the trajectory of doubling the grant to \$13,000, a \$7.7 billion increase to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), an increase to the Basic Needs and Completion Fund grants, a permanent Emergency Aid grant, additional funding to the Affordable Connectivity Program, and an increase the Open Textbooks Pilot (OTP) program to \$14 million.

Higher Learning Advocates (HLA) is a non-profit advocacy organization working to shift federal policy from higher education to higher learning—education and training beyond high school that leads to a degree, credential, or employment. With 39 million Americans with some college credit but no credential, we strive to strengthen the connection between federal policy and the needs of today's students, employers, and communities to ensure all who start or have started a program of study can complete it.

As the focus on growing and maintaining a competitive American economy increases, Congress must continue to invest in key supports to ensure access to and attainment of postsecondary credentials for today's students. We urge the subcommittees to make integral investments in essential childcare, student supports, and campus mental health programs as part of the FY24 appropriations legislation. These investments are critical if we are to advance policies to encourage a system of higher learning that is affordable and responsive to the needs of today's students. Investing in higher education is investing in our economy.

The Promoting Advancement Through Transit Help (PATH) to College Act is a bicameral, bipartisan bill that will increase access to transportation for the most underserved student populations. Without transportation, students face a significant barrier to attending class. Approximately 40 percent of Americans lack access to affordable public transportation, and only 57 percent of community colleges are within walking distance of public transportation. Student parents, working students, and low-income students are more likely to attend community and technical colleges, and 99 percent of students attending community college live off campus.

Adding similar language to the PATH to College Act to the FY24 appropriations legislation will ensure more students can attend their classes.

The Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) program provides vital support for the participation and success of low-income parents in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based child care, which is widely recognized as one of the most important supports for parenting college students. Increasing CCAMPIS to \$500 million will provide child care support to about six percent of Pell-eligible student parents of children ages 0-5. We are encouraged by the funding increase CCAMPIS received in FY22 and FY23. To serve today's students best, CCAMPIS needs a larger infusion of funds to meet current needs.

Additionally, we urge your subcommittees to provide \$20 million for the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant. This grant program allows college campuses to develop a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to mental health services for all college students, including those at risk for suicide, depression, and serious mental illness. These are critical problems to address, especially as the number of college students facing serious mental health struggles continues to grow—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. More than a quarter had considered suicide in the past 30 days. This grant funding enables colleges to help students who are experiencing mental health challenges or contemplating suicide complete their studies and address their underlying mental health needs. As the mental health challenges on college campuses have grown, funding for this vital program has become even more critical.

Additionally, we urge that you increase funding for the Pell Grant program to put the maximum grant on the path to doubling the grant amount in the coming years and link it to increased funding with inflation in future years. We also ask for an increase in the Basic Needs and Completion Fund Grants, a \$7.7 billion increase in investment to the CCDBG, a \$14 million increase to the OTP program, and to add additional funding to the Affordable Connectivity Program in the FY24 appropriations package.

Finally, as the manager of the Today's Student Coalition, we also support and endorse the requests submitted by the coalition as included in the attached letter. These requests are good for today's students.

Thank you for considering these requests. These important funding requests will ensure the childcare, higher education, and mental health needs of today's students are addressed so that more of today's students can attend and complete higher education programs. Please contact us if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julie Peller