May 14, 2021

Members of the California Delegation  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Congress Member:

On behalf of Independent California Colleges and Universities, I respectfully urge that you make doubling the maximum Pell Grant to $13,000 the top higher education priority for this Congress. We also support the expansion of eligibility to allow DACA and other undocumented students access to this important aid program and improve their lives.

The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AICCU) is the organizational voice for over 80 independent, nonprofit higher education institutions in the state. Together, we educate approximately 200,000 undergraduate students, including over 58,000 Pell recipients. In total, students in the independent higher education sector in the state received over $258,000,000 in Pell Grant awards, creating much needed college access for these vulnerable students. More needs to be done.

Doubling the Pell Grant is the single most important thing Congress can do to increase access to college and make it more affordable for low-income students. The Pell Grant, which has always enjoyed strong bipartisan support, is a well-known and proven program that is at once cost-effective and an equitable way to support students.

At its peak, the Pell Grant award covered about three quarters of the cost of college. Today, the maximum grant covers less than 30 percent. With low-income students struggling in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the urgency of this action is apparent. The Pell Grant is the fairest and most efficient way to get education funding to those who need it most. It is a program that will not only open the doors of college and opportunity to more students but also addresses the issue of student debt head on. Doubling the Pell Grant will increase student access, promote college affordability, reduce the burden of college debt, help meet students’ basic needs, support degree completion, and help the country achieve a post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

Thank you for your work on behalf of California. Doubling the maximum Pell Grant will help build the workforce of the future and an educated citizenry that is reflective of the rich diversity in our state and country. I look forward to working with you to address issues of college access, affordability, and success. If you have questions, please contact Tom Vu, AICCU Vice President for Policy (thomas.vu@aiccu.edu).

Sincerely,

Kristen F. Soares  
President

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