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Congress of the United States
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November 5, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Clyburn
Majority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-329, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
House Committee on Education and Labor
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleagues,

We applaud your work in advancing President Biden's Build Back Better agenda. While the proposed framework is far from perfect, there is a lot to like about the direction of these negotiations, and we look forward to working with you to make improvements. We support increasing the maximum Pell Grant award and appreciate that the newly released draft included a \$550 increase for some Pell Grant recipients; however, the bill prohibits any student attending a proprietary institution from receiving the expanded Pell Grant. We have significant concerns about this provision and urge you to revise the proposal to ensure all low-income students are eligible for the expanded Pell Grant.

For nearly half a century, the Pell Grant program has been the heart of our nation's commitment to expanding access to higher education for low-income students. More than 6 million low-income undergraduate students receive Pell Grants every year,¹ and roughly one million of those students attend proprietary institutions.² Approximately 70% of all Pell Grant funding goes to students whose family income is below \$30,000, and 95% goes to students with family incomes below \$60,000.³ The Pell Grant program is particularly important for minority students, as

¹ College Board, Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2021, (Oct. 2021), <https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/trends-college-pricing-student-aid-2021.pdf>.

² Dep't of Educ., Federal Pell Grant Program Annual Data Reports, (2017-18), <https://www2.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell-data.html>.

³ *Id.*

roughly 58% of African-American, 47% of Hispanic, and 51% of Native American/Native Alaskan students receive Pell Grants.⁴

In September, the House Education and Labor Committee marked up a bold proposal that would have expanded the Pell Grant for all low-income students.⁵ In contrast to that bill, the recently released framework prohibits students attending proprietary institutions from receiving the expanded Pell Grant. Make no mistake, this proposal hurts students, not institutions. And worse yet, the proposal will have a disparate impact on minority and first-generation students, which runs contrary to the policy goals of the Build Back Better agenda.

We need to do more to bring accountability to all sectors of higher education; however, punishing students does not accomplish that objective. Any accountability rules should be focused on institutions, not students.

Financial aid professionals agree this is not the right policy approach. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators also opposes this proposal and believes it would add an unprecedented and overly complicated administrative burden for schools and students.⁶

Congress has never passed legislation creating this type of distinction in the Pell Grant program. We urge you not to break from that bipartisan tradition and hope you will ensure that all low-income students are eligible for the expanded Pell Grant.

Sincerely,



Al Lawson
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

⁴ NASFAA, Issue Brief: Doubling the Maximum Pell Grant, (June 2021), https://www.nasfaa.org/issue_brief_double_pell.

⁵ House Education and Labor Committee, Committee Print to comply with the Reconciliation Directive included in Section 2002 of the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, S. Con. Res. 14, (Sept. 9, 2021), <https://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/committee-print-to-comply-with-the-reconciliation-directive-included-in-section-2002-of-the-concurrent-resolution-on-the-budget-for-fiscal-year-2022-s-con-res-14>.

⁶ NASFAA, What's In, What's Out of the White House's Narrowed Spending Framework, (Oct. 28, 2021), https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/26308/What_s_In_What_s_Out_of_the_White_House_s_Narrowed_Spending_Framework.



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