



October 25, 2016

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Cochran and Ranking Members Lowey and Mikulski,

On behalf of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), I write to express support for the restoration of year-round Pell Grants in the final fiscal year (FY) 2017 Labor, Health, Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. NASFAA represents more than 20,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities, and career schools across the country. All told, NASFAA members serve nine out of every ten undergraduates.

Well-targeted in nature, the federal Pell Grant program provides access to higher education for nearly 9 million of our nation's lowest-income students each year and is widely supported by Republicans and Democrats in both chambers. While the Pell Grant opens doors for these students every year, the rules and regulations guiding the program no longer meet the needs of today's learner and often impede success and completion. For a variety of reasons, many students prefer to move through their academic programs continuously, without taking off any summers or semesters. Each year, Pell-eligible students who choose to enroll continually run out of Pell funds by summer because they are only eligible to receive one scheduled award per academic year.

Offering year-round Pell, as it did in its first iteration, will allow students to attend postsecondary education throughout the entire year and will ultimately result in faster degree completion, reduced levels of indebtedness, and increased flexibility. For these reasons, proposals to bring back year-round Pell have received wide bipartisan support on Capitol Hill and within the broader higher education policy community. Its prior demise was driven solely

by budget politics, and now that the Pell program is on more solid financial footing, it is time to reinstate this important provision.

The restoration of the year-round Pell Grant was included in this year's bipartisan Senate appropriations bill, and through negotiations, we strongly encourage inclusion of this provision in any final FY 2017 agreement. It is also critical that negotiations utilize the exact same language as the Senate bill, as it corrects significant administrative issues that were associated with implementing the program in its first iteration. While nuanced, these corrections will be crucial to a successful implementation of year-round Pell in the future.

In addition, as the final FY 2017 budget is negotiated, we respectfully recommend that Congress not withdraw surplus funds from the Pell Grant program for other programs, particularly those outside of higher education.

We are grateful to Congress' long-standing commitment to the Pell Grant program and appreciate your willingness to strengthen and improve the program for students in the future.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Draeger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Justin Draeger, President & CEO