

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 19, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
U.S. Senate Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
U.S. Senate Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
U.S. House of Representatives Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
U.S. House of Representatives Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole,:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we request that you include at least \$32 million in funding for the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program (“Basic Needs Grants”) within the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education.

Research from The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice shows that nearly three in five students in higher education do not have enough to eat or a stable place to live. Rates of basic needs insecurity are much higher for historically marginalized students, including students of color, parenting students, LGBTQ students, first-generation students, Pell Grant recipients, former foster youth, and justice-involved students. Students at community colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities also experience higher levels of basic needs insecurity.

Basic Needs Grants leverage Federal, State, local, and institutional resources to improve access to the nutritious food, stable housing, affordable child care, physical and mental health services, technology, and transportation that students need to be successful. Basic Needs Grants were first funded in FY21, and we are grateful for the increase the program received in FY22. The first six winners of the FY21 competition were announced in January 2022 and enroll just over 72,000 undergraduate students.

Reflecting the substantial demand and the range of areas that institutions can use these funds to address, we ask that increase support for this program to \$32 million. This will allow a larger group of colleges and universities across the country to fund comprehensive supports for students, while building a set of models and promising practices that colleges and universities can replicate. With this level of funding, we estimate that the number of receiving institutions could grow to more than 40, serving more than half a million students nationwide.

In addition to expanded funding, we also encourage you to include report language that focuses the program on systemic approaches that are informed by behavioral science and human-centered design to addressing basic needs insecurity. The evidence is clear that addressing student basic needs through a multi-pronged approach can benefit students and reduce administrative burdens. Colleges and universities should regularly survey and evaluate the needs of their students to support evidence-based decision-making, leverage other Federal, state, local, and institutional resources (such as public benefit programs and tax benefits) for solutions, and centralize supports through basic needs centers or hubs that offer services such as emergency aid, public benefits access, case management, food pantries, and other services.

Addressing the crisis of student basic needs insecurity is essential for helping students access and afford higher education, especially as we continue to grapple with the ongoing disruptions triggered by

the pandemic. Basic Needs Grants will help build that recovery by supporting evidence-based approaches and helping students navigate a complex web of supports. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



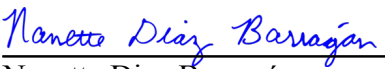
Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



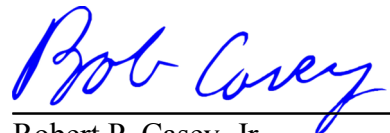
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



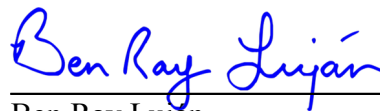
Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



John Garamendi
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Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker
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