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March 13, 2017

President Trump:

As you work with federal agencies to recommend priorities for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Budget Request, we strongly urge you to increase funding for the federal Pell Grant program in order to ensure that Pell Grants continue to keep pace with rising costs.

As you know, Pell Grants play a critical role in making college affordable for 8.5 million of our nation's most underprivileged students. In the 2014-2015 school year, 83% of Pell recipients came from families with incomes of \$40,000 or less, including 44% with family incomes below \$15,000. For these students, higher education is not a forgone conclusion. With tuition averaging more than \$9,000 a year at a four-year public college and expenses often exceeding an additional \$15,000 a year, many Pell eligible students struggle to pay for college. Despite this hefty price tag, Pell Grants remain the primary source of assistance the federal government provides to help low-income students shoulder the financial burden of a college degree.

Recognizing the importance of Pell Grants, Congress passed legislation in 2010, which increased the maximum Pell Grant award by the Consumer Price Index from 2013 to 2017. CPI indexing, which is set to expire this year, ensures that annual Pell Grant awards continue to rise along with the cost of college. The significance of CPI indexing cannot be understated. In 1975, a student using Pell Grants at a 4-year public university would see that award cover almost 80% of the costs of attendance. Using the estimates above, today's Pell Grant, which is now permanently capped at \$5,920, would only cover roughly 29% of the costs of attendance. This number is sure to decline further as the Pell Grant remains stagnant against rising college costs. In fact, failure to continue indexing Pell Grants past 2017 means that Pell dependent students would see their awards reduced by \$1,300 by the 2026-2027 school year.

While indexing is just one step towards addressing our nation's college affordability crisis, making this investment in higher education is a necessary step. It is essential that we work together to help hard-working American students achieve their dreams and to build a 21st Century workforce.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



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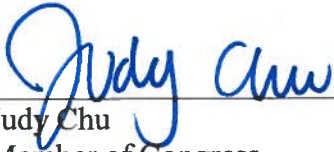
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Adam Smith
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Judy Chu
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Peter A. DeFazio
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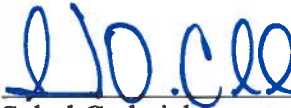
Rick Larsen
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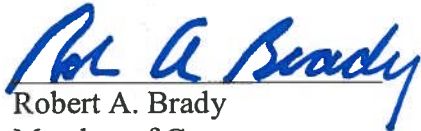
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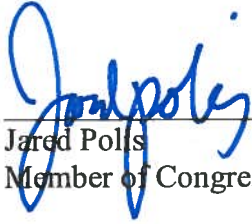
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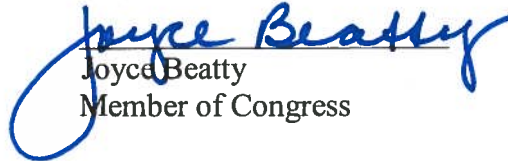
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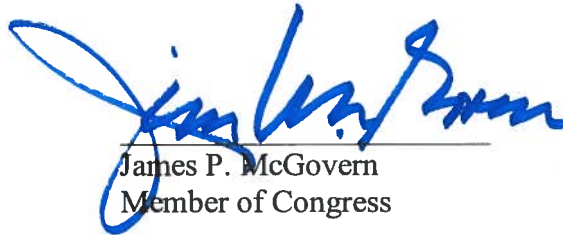
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