



October 19, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Blunt and Cole and Ranking Members Murray and DeLauro:

On behalf of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I thank you and your Congressional colleagues for passing the September short-term continuing resolution, providing a path forward for fiscal year 2017 appropriations action before the end of this year. We urge Congress to complete the FY 2017 appropriations process this fall and to send the President bipartisan funding legislation by the end of the calendar year.

As the House and Senate Labor, Health & Human Services and Education (LHHS) Subcommittees work to reconcile your positions on funding for FY 2017, I urge you to make research and higher education programs a top priority. These investments continue to demonstrate a significant return, growing our economy and improving the health and well-being of our society. We are particularly enthusiastic about the opportunity an FY 2017 appropriations vehicle provides to make needed investments in critical research through the National Institutes of Health, and for expanding higher education access and completion by restoring year-round Pell.

Below, I reiterate APLU's funding requests for FY 2017 in the LHHS Appropriations bill and urge that you prioritize these important programs in the final package. Also, delineated below is our support of and concerns about various proposals included in the House and Senate funding bills thus far.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):

APLU greatly appreciates your commitment to the world's premier biomedical research funding agency, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and we are grateful for the increases provided in both the House and Senate bills. We strongly encourage you to **fund the NIH at \$34.536 billion** in FY 2017 and no less than \$34.084 billion, the amount included in the Senate Appropriations bill. The scientific and medical advances supported by the NIH yield a strong return and bolster the health of our economy as well as our citizens. Since 2003, the agency has lost over 20 percent of its purchasing power. An appropriation of at least \$34.084 billion in FY2017 would help NIH begin to catch up with biomedical inflation and expand its important work of supporting leading-edge research and the next generation of scientists with the goals of saving lives and improving health through medical discovery and scientific leadership.

As demand for health care services increases across the country, APLU encourages you to increase funding for Title VII health professions programs and Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs at the Health Resources Services Administration. We are grateful that both the House and Senate bills propose increases for the Title VII and VIII programs which play a critical role in bolstering the health workforce and meeting the health education needs in the United States. In addition, funding for these programs remains important for meeting the health needs of underserved populations. We support both the Senate bill increase of \$35 million and the House bill increase of \$32 million dollars.

We also ask you to restore support for the Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ) to **at least \$334 million**, the same level as FY 2016. The research that AHRQ funds helps inform what treatments work best to combat disease and how to best deliver those treatments to patients who need them. Ultimately, this information improves health care and saves both patients and the government money. The House and Senate proposals to cut AHRQ in FY 2017 would follow FY 2016 cuts of eight percent, further crippling an agency which has at the core of its mission health care safety, effectiveness and efficiency.

Additionally, in the HHS title of the bill, please maintain the Department's salary cap for extramural researchers at Executive Level II, as both the House and Senate bills do. We also urge that the final bill not include new restrictions on important lifesaving research.

Department of Education:

APLU urges you to provide robust funding for student success and financial aid programs. APLU empathically supports the restoration of year-round Pell included in the Senate bill. The restoration of year-round Pell will enable students to afford summer classes so they can graduate sooner with less debt and enter the workforce or advanced degree programs more quickly. Additionally, studies have repeatedly demonstrated that uninterrupted academic progress boosts graduation rates. We are particularly appreciative that the Senate bill appropriately includes language that would encourage all eligible students, regardless of credit accumulation or enrollment intensity, to attend college year-round.

For the Pell Grant program, APLU **strongly supports an appropriated level of \$22.475 billion** in FY 2017 to achieve an estimated total maximum award of \$5,935 when including mandatory funds. The Pell Grant program is the largest federal source of college aid to students and is crucial

in helping low-income students access higher education. Pell is also a critical tool for college completion and for reaching the national goal of having 60 percent of the working age population hold a post-secondary degree.

We are opposed to the \$1.2 billion Pell surplus reduction in the Senate bill and even more concerned about the cut of \$1.31 billion in the House appropriation. Priorities such as year-round Pell and future cost projections of Pell require maintaining the surplus and appropriations levels. While APLU opposes the rescission of the Pell surplus, the House cut in the appropriated amount is of even greater concern as it establishes a baseline of Pell funding that is inadequate to meet future needs.

APLU also **encourages you to fund the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant at \$757 million, the Federal Work Study program at \$990 million, the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program at \$31 million, the Institute of Education Sciences at \$694 million.** We are particularly alarmed by the proposed elimination of GAANN in the House bill as the program provides essential opportunities for economically disadvantaged students, who have excelled academically, to pursue graduate education in areas of critical national need. GAANN is a unique program that supplements rather than duplicates other federal fellowship programs.

We are also greatly concerned about proposed cuts to the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). APLU is particularly supportive of the IES Research, Development, and Dissemination and Research in Special Education accounts as they fund front-line research through the National Center for Education Research and the National Center for Special Education Research. These Centers develop educational interventions that improve academic achievement, reduce achievement gaps, and increase postsecondary access and completion. IES, like all research agencies, requires steady, sustained growth to keep the United States competitive as a global leader in innovation.

Further, APLU strongly recommends you fund the **Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) at the House bill level of \$345 million and the TRIO programs at the House level of \$960 million.** Both of these programs help increase the number of low-income students who enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

As our connection to the global economy continues to grow in importance, we must ensure that the next generation of students will graduate with the skills necessary to compete in our continually evolving world. APLU **encourages you to provide \$76 million for the Title VI International Education and Foreign Languages Studies programs.** This represents a modest increase of 5.5 percent after years of flat-funding and reductions. The consequences of the lack of investment in Title VI are apparent on campus with fewer opportunities for students to advance their global understanding. Since 2011, the Title VI programs have been cut by 43 percent, resulting in 25 percent fewer nationally recognized resource centers. The proposed cut in the Senate bill to the overseas component of Title VI is concerning as Fulbright-Hays provides important opportunities for improvements in teaching and research in other cultures and languages, as well as the training of specialists.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and recommendations. Though there are some decisions made in the FY 2017 appropriations bills thus far that we oppose, we strongly believe that the FY 2017 funding process should be completed this year. We urge the 114th Congress to send the President bipartisan appropriations legislation that prioritizes important investments in higher education and research before the end of the year. Please consider APLU a resource as you work to finalize FY 2017 appropriations.

Sincerely,



Peter McPherson
President
APLU

cc: Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader Harry Reid
Speaker Paul Ryan
Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran
House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers
Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Nita Lowey
Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies