

October 24, 2019

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

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

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

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

As president of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I write to thank you for your ongoing work on the FY2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill and urge support for APLU's priorities as you reconcile differences between House and Senate measures.

I further note how crucial it is for Congress to complete the appropriations process. Additional continuing resolutions will fail to capitalize on Congress' meaningful work in addressing budget caps while ceding the opportunity to make important increases to key investments in scientific research and higher education. Understanding that the House marked up their bills under a higher total funding level than what was passed through the bipartisan budget agreement in July, APLU respectfully urges that the strongest possible funding levels for important research programs prevail in the final bill.

APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities. Annually, APLU's 197 U.S. member campuses enroll 4.1 million undergraduates and 1.2 million graduate students, award 1.1 million degrees, employ 1.1 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$42.4 billion in university-based research.

## **Requests within the Department of Health and Human Services**

APLU appreciates members' continued commitment to the world's premier biomedical research funding agency, the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We are grateful for the increases provided in both the House and Senate bills and request that Congress fund **NIH at least at \$42.084 billion**, the amount included in the Senate Appropriations bill. The scientific and medical advances supported by NIH bolster the health of our economy as well as our citizens. We appreciate the deep commitment that the Appropriations Committees and others in Congress have demonstrated to the NIH over recent years and encourage you to sustain this important effort.

We appreciate the House and Senate's commitment to continue the **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)** as a standalone agency and advocate that members incorporate the House's level of at least **\$358 million** to fund AHRQ. The agency produces important research to make health care safer, higher quality, more accessible, equitable, and affordable. AHRQ develops the knowledge, tools, and data needed to improve health system performance and help patients, health-care professionals, and policy makers make informed health decisions which strengthens our nation's healthcare system.

Additionally, as demand for healthcare services intensifies across the country, APLU encourages members to increase funding for **Title VII health professions programs and Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development** programs at the Health Resources Services Administration. We appreciate the House's increased investment in this area and urge Congress to agree to at least **\$690 million** for currently funded programs. Title VII and VIII programs are the only federally-funded programs designed to meet the growing needs for healthcare professionals, improve the diversity of the health workforce, and ensure access to quality care for all populations.

## **Requests within the Department of Education**

APLU urges increased support for federal student aid and higher education programs, which is needed to expand access and affordability for students while enhancing our nation's economic competitive edge through a skilled workforce. Investments in these programs continue to demonstrate a significant return, growing our economy and improving the health and well-being of our society.

APLU supports the appropriations necessary to reach the **maximum Pell Grant** award of at least **\$6,345**, which is the award level proposed in the House bill. The Pell Grant program is the largest federal source of college aid to students and is essential to greater degree attainment among low-income students. APLU urges appropriators to not rescind from the program's surplus, which is needed to protect the long-term fiscal health of the program and support improvements such as continued inflation adjustments.

We further request that members support at least the House levels of **\$1.028 billion for the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG)** and **\$1.434 billion for the Federal Work Study (FWS)** program. The SEOG program supplements Pell Grants and provides

additional aid to the neediest students. The program leverages additional investment by institutions in need-based aid and requires institutions to contribute at least 25 percent of the award funds, making it a strong leverage of the federal investment building on Pell Grants. The FWS program is another critical partnership between the federal government and institutions and provides students the opportunity to earn additional aid through part-time employment on campus and in the community. FWS is an essential part of a financial aid package and a strong alternative to additional loan debt.

At a time when more fields require increased skills and further postsecondary education, we strongly urge members to make increased investments in the **Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN)** program and request that members agree to at least the House level of **\$24 million**. GAANN focuses on areas of national needs, such as STEM fields, and helps ensure a strong pipeline of talented experts who will help meet the demands of our 21st century workforce.

APLU strongly recommends funding **Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)** and **TRIO Programs** at least at levels consistent with the House, **\$395 million and \$1.160 billion respectively**. APLU institutions receive TRIO and GEAR UP grants to partner with community organizations and schools to encourage and ensure access to higher education and success in college. These increased investments are critical to help increase the number of low-income students who enter and thrive in postsecondary education.

APLU urges members to support at least the House level of **\$89 million** for **Title VI International Education Programs**. These programs play a critical role in expanding the international competency skills for the nation's next generation workforce that will support American global leadership, economic competitiveness, and long-term security.

Lastly, APLU urges members to fund the **Institute of Education Sciences (IES)** at levels at least consistent with the House at **\$650 million**. IES is the primary federal agency that invests in research focused on education. Since it was founded in 2002, IES has dramatically improved the quality of research on education policy and practice and increased demand for evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests regarding the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill. Please consider APLU as a resource as you work to finalize FY2020 funding.

Sincerely,



Peter McPherson  
President, APLU

cc:

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby

House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey

Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Patrick Leahy

House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Kay Granger

Members of the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies