

November 13, 2015

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 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 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 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 Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, providing a path forward for FY2016 federal appropriations. As the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittees work to reconcile your positions on funding for FY2016, 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 wellbeing of our society. Below, I reiterate APLU's funding requests for FY2016 in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill and urge that you prioritize these important programs within your increased allocation. Also, highlighted below is our support of and concerns about various proposals included in the 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 least at the Senate level of \$32 billion in FY2016. 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 \$32 billion in FY2016 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. Additionally, we support the inclusion of \$50 million in the Senate bill for NIH

grants to public and nonprofit entities to expand, remodel, renovate, or alter existing research facilities or construct new research facilities.

As demand for health care services increases across the country, APLU encourages you to plus up funding for Title VII health professions programs and Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs at the Health Resources Services Administration rather than to cut these important programs in FY2016. We suggest a level of \$524 million, an increase of 7.6 percent over FY2015. The Title VII and VIII programs 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 also urge you to restore support for the Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ) to \$364 million, level with FY2015 funding. The actions relative to AHRQ in the House and Senate bill are short-sighted and likely a result of the limited allocation when the FY2016 appropriations process began. 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.

Additionally, in the HHS title of the bill, please maintain the Department's salary cap for extramural researchers at Executive Level II. 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 strongly supports an appropriated level of \$4,860 in FY2016 for the maximum Pell Grant award, achieving an estimated total maximum award of \$5,915 when including mandatory funds. The Federal Pell Grant program is the largest federal source of college aid to students and is crucial in helping low-income students access higher education and reaching the national goal of having 60 percent of the working age population hold a post-secondary degree.

We are pleased that both the House and Senate measures have provided sufficient funding to maintain the scheduled increase in the maximum Pell award. However, the increase should be attained without sacrificing the long-term fiscal health of the program. Reducing the Pell surplus jeopardizes the financial health of the program for the next fiscal year and beyond. Furthermore, reducing funding available for the Pell Grant program during a year in which the Higher Education Act is due to be reauthorized may limit Congress' ability to make important improvements to the program, such as reinstating year-round Pell. We urge the committees to restore the Pell surplus while retaining the increase in the Pell Grant award.

APLU also encourages you to fund the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant at \$737 million, the Federal Work Study program at \$990 million, the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need program at \$31 million, the Institute of Education Sciences at \$675 million and the Fund for the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) First in the World competitive grant program at \$200 million. These programs are an important federal

investment to ensure we have a citizenry and workforce prepared to tackle our nation's challenges.

Further, APLU strongly recommends you fund the Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) at \$322.7 million and the TRIO programs at \$900 million, as provided in the House Committee's LHHS FY2016 bill. 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, the next generation of students will need to graduate with the skills necessary to compete in this economy. 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.

APLU also requests \$5 million within FIPSE for a competitive grant program enabling universities to leverage funding to significantly increase the number of post-secondary students studying abroad and to expand diversity of participants and locations including developing nations (such a provision was included in the FY2015 Senate LHHS report under Title VI). These programs play a critical role in continuing our nation's global leadership, economic competitiveness, and long-term security.

As you know, the Perkins Loan Program recently expired despite House passage of a bill to extend the program and strong bipartisan Senate support for the bill. The bipartisan Higher Education Extension Act would extend the Perkins program for one year with an appropriate offset so that a long-term extension and reforms can be more thoughtfully considered in the context of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. APLU supports including the Perkins extension in the FY2016 LHHS bill with the offset contained in the Higher Education Extension Act.

Finally, some policy provisions included in the House and Senate bills are concerning, particularly since they could undermine important oversight of federal resources. Undoubtedly, the Department of Education can and has overstepped in its regulations of institutions of higher education in some areas. However, APLU believes the Department has an important role to play in providing targeted, responsible oversight of post-secondary institutions to protect students and ensure taxpayer dollars are wisely spent. APLU supports targeted repeal of overly-burdensome and unnecessary regulations as detailed in the [Task Force on Federal Regulation of Higher Education report](#). In our view, a comprehensive attempt to address higher education regulation should be done in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, not in language included in appropriations measures.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and recommendations. Please consider APLU a resource as you continue your work on FY2016 appropriations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter McPherson".

Peter McPherson
President
APLU

cc: 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