Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries,

As president of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I write to express deep concern and opposition to H.R.5394, the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations bill, as it would pull critical Department of Education student aid from students jeopardizing their path to degree completion and substantially set back critical National Institutes of Health biomedical research to find cures to debilitating diseases and ailments. While I appreciate the interest of members in addressing the federal debt and deficit, these are investments the country cannot afford to cut.

APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities to support American prosperity. With a membership of more than 250 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations across all 50 states, APLU’s agenda is built on pillars of student success, academic excellence, world-leading scientific research, and community and economic engagement. Annually, our U.S. member campuses enroll 4.2 million undergraduates and 1.2 million graduate students, award 1.2 million degrees, employ 1.1 million faculty and staff, and conduct $48.7 billion in university-based research.

APLU is deeply alarmed by the eliminations of Federal Work Study (FWS) and Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (SEOG) in the Fiscal Year 2024 funding measure. Investment in student financial aid programs helps open the doors to postsecondary education to low-income students and furthers the development of an American workforce prepared to globally compete. FWS and SEOG build upon the cornerstone of federal student aid, the Pell Grant, to keep students on the path to degree completion. The elimination of FWS and SEOG, combined with flat funding the Pell grant for the first time since 2012, and other proposed cuts to postsecondary education programs in the bill, would create financial emergencies and shortfalls for low-income students. The evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that the number one reason for students, including academically high-achieving students, dropping out of college is financial. Cutting these programs would not only drive-up student borrowing and potentially discourage the next generation of students, it would also create a real and immediate financial shortfall for current low-income students who have rely on these programs to earn their degree.
APLU is also extremely concerned by deep cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Significant cuts to NIH make maintaining American research and development leadership worldwide more challenging at a time when competitor nations are increasing their support for biomedical research. Funding cuts will delay progress towards new cures, treatments, and diagnostics that benefit the nation and drive our biomedical innovation economy forward. Beyond sustaining American leadership in biomedical research, the NIH is a major catalyst for local economies, directly and indirectly supporting over 560,000 jobs and producing $96.84 billion in new economic activity in FY22, equaling an economic return of $2.64 for every $1 in research funding. Rather than cutting billions of dollars for NIH-supported medical research occurring in nearly every congressional district across the country, the House should build on decades of strong bipartisan support and investment that has led to the lifesaving medications and treatments Americans rely on every day.

APLU urges the U.S. House of Representatives to reject eliminating essential student aid programs and cutting funding for biomedical research that holds the promise to discover cures while improving health and quality of life for Americans. Thank you for your consideration of APLU’s views.

Sincerely,

Mark Becker  
President  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  

CC: Members of the 118th Congress

---