



April 22, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
478 Russell Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, and New York's U.S. Representatives,

On behalf of the 1.2 million students who study at one of New York's public or private not-for-profit colleges and universities, we extend our gratitude for your relentless advocacy and the funding that you delivered for all New Yorkers within the American Rescue Plan. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted our students, faculty, and staff, and your efforts have helped our campuses navigate this crisis, and will allow us to be the engine of the state and national economic recovery.

Our institutions are committed to rebuilding and doing so in a *just* and *equitable* way. We are dedicated to empowering disadvantaged students from communities hardest hit by this pandemic, supporting them academically and socially, and providing a path to opportunity. **Therefore, we write to express our strong support to invest in these students by doubling the Pell Grant in fiscal year 2022.**

More than 6.2 million students nationwide – including more than 385,000 New Yorkers – benefitted from Pell in the last academic year. However, the value of Pell has fallen precipitously. In 1980, more than 75 percent of a student's four-year public college costs were covered. Today, that is closer to 30 percent. Federal student aid has also not matched the growth in aid that private, not-for-profit colleges and universities give to their students. Since the Great Recession, New York's private colleges have doubled the aid they provide students to \$6.4 billion annually. Doubling Pell will restore the full partnership between the federal government and New York's colleges.

The stagnation of Pell grants harms the very students the program was designed to help: students from low-income backgrounds who need assistance paying college costs such as tuition, housing, books, supplies, transportation, as well as food and personal living expenses that are often not paid directly to a campus, but are factored into determining a student's financial need. In many cases, these are the same students who were hardest hit by the pandemic.

The current maximum grant is not enough; far too many low-income students don't receive sufficient aid to cover all of their educational costs, leaving them with significant gaps in their financial aid packages. Doubling Pell grants will be a transformative opportunity to help current students complete their studies, and to engage countless others who think higher education is out of reach.

In addition to doubling the Pell grant, we also encourage that you:

- Expand short-term Pell to students in programs of less than 600 hours, and expand Pell eligibility to 15-30 week, short-term and industry-aligned micro-credential programs offered by public and private, not-for-profit colleges and universities.
- Increase Federal Work Study (FWS) authorization levels for the institutions that serve the most students receiving Pell, and expand the definition of FWS for off-campus cooperative education and other work-based learning experiences with nonprofit, public and for-profit employers.

Thanks to you, instead of making large and painful cuts that would have been devastating for our students and the communities we call home, we are able to focus on making social justice and accessibility one of the positive outcomes of an otherwise difficult period. The expansion of federal financial aid opportunities will be a game-changer for students from every region of our state and on every campus.

You have our full support – please do not hesitate to reach out if we can ever be helpful.

Sincerely,



Jim Malatras
Chancellor
SUNY



Drew Bogner
Interim President
CICU



Félix V. Matos Rodríguez
Chancellor
CUNY