

January 25, 2022

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
The Honorable Diana Harshbarger
The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
The Honorable Jim Cooper
The Honorable Mark Green
The Honorable Steve Cohen

The Honorable Bill Hagerty
The Honorable Tim Burchett
The Honorable Scott DesJarlais
The Honorable John Rose
The Honorable David Kustoff

Dear Members of Congress,

As leaders of Tennessee's colleges and universities, we understand the transformational power of higher education, particularly for our lower income and first-generation students. Given the recent economic impact of COVID-19 on many students and families, the Pell Grant program is especially critical in ensuring that all students have the opportunity to attend a great college or university, regardless of their financial means. While we are grateful for steps taken to date to increase the maximum Pell Grant more must be done. To this end, we ask for your support in making an affordable, high-quality college education more attainable for students by doubling the maximum Pell Grant award.

An established, means-tested program that enjoys strong bipartisan support, Pell Grants have served as our nation's foundational investment in higher education since their creation nearly 50 years ago. Today, we believe the single most effective way to make higher education more accessible and affordable is by dramatically increasing the maximum Pell Grant award. This long overdue investment will help to drive economic recovery and mobility, address racial and economic inequities in college completion rates, and increase overall educational attainment. Furthermore, by directing federal taxpayer resources toward this proven, means-tested program, we will preserve students' ability to choose the institution that best meets their needs—whether it be a research university, a liberal arts college, an HBCU or a community college.

Pell Grants help nearly 7 million low- and moderate-income students attend and complete college annually. In Tennessee, more than 133,000 postsecondary students, or 41 percent, received a Pell Grant in 2018, equating to nearly \$550 million in awarded funds. Students from each of Tennessee's 95 counties rely on the Pell Grant program to build their futures. Pell Grants are especially critical for students of color and students with family incomes of less than \$50,000. The Pell Grant, arguably more than any other program, carries the power to break the cycle of poverty in the lives of so many Tennesseans.

A common purpose among Tennessee's private colleges is to provide high-quality education to first generation Pell eligible students. Just this past academic year 35 percent of Tennesseans attending a private college or university were eligible for the Pell Grant. Upon graduation, these students continue onto graduate school or enter high- demand career fields in healthcare, business, education, and others. Among the many examples of deserving recipients is an accomplished student who served as valedictorian of their Middle Tennessee high school and can now pursue a degree at Vanderbilt University thanks to a Pell Grant coupled with institutional aid from Opportunity Vanderbilt—an important step toward their

lifelong career goal of business administration.

Pell paved the way for naturalized emigrants from Panama and Mexico to be able to send their three daughters to UT's flagship campus in Knoxville. The eldest majored in physics at UT, graduated in 2015 and then earned her master's degree in electrical engineering in 2018. She now works as an electronics electrical engineer for the Naval Surface Warfare Center. Following her sister's path, the middle daughter graduated with a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering in 2020 and is now an electrical engineer for Bechtel's Nuclear and Security Division. The youngest works part time for Jacobs Engineering in Oak Ridge, running power simulations on the electrical engineering team. She plans to graduate with her Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering in 2021. Their story is a perfect example of how Pell provides access that helps power our workforce.

A Nashville State Community College student was returning to school after a 10-year break in enrollment. He had struggled in the past as the single father of two children, working two jobs to make ends meet and, as a result, failed to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress standards. After a successful appeal, he became eligible for a Pell Grant which allowed him to return to school to continue working towards the successful completion of his degree. Without the Pell Grant program, he would have been unable to attend school. Now, he expects to graduate with his associate degree in May 2022 and plans to open his own business.

We urge your support for doubling the maximum Pell Grant and permanently indexing the grant to inflation to ensure that its value will no longer diminish over time. These actions would not only honor the history and value of this program as the keystone federal investment in college affordability, but they also would help more students attend college, earn degrees and secure brighter futures for their families and themselves. As we look toward the next chapter for our region and our state, there is nothing more important. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Daniel Diermeier
Chancellor
Vanderbilt University

Claude O. Pressnell, Jr.
President
Tennessee Independent Colleges and
Universities Association

Randy Boyd
President
University of Tennessee

Flora W. Tydings
Chancellor
Tennessee Board of Regents – The College
System of TN

Forrest E. Harris
President
American Baptist College

Dr. Michael Licari
President
Austin Peay State University

Dr. Betty Sue McGarvey
President
Baptist Health Sciences University

L. Gregory Jones
President
Belmont University

Dr. Walter Butler
President
Bethel University

Douglas F. Mann
President
Bryan College

Charles A. Fowler
President
Carson-Newman University

Rebecca L. Ashford, Ed.D.
President
Chattanooga State Community College

David L. Archer
Interim President
Christian Brothers University

Dr. Janet F. Smith
President
Columbia State Community College

Paul C. Stumb, Ph.D.
President
Cumberland University

Karen A. Bowyer
President
Dyersburg State Community College

Brian Noland
President
East Tennessee State University

Vann R. Newkirk, Sr., Ph.D.
President
Fisk University

David R. Shannon
President
Freed-Hardeman University

Dr. George Pimentel
President
Jackson State Community College

Alexander Whitaker
President
King University

Logan Hampton
President
Lane College

Mark Walker
President
Lee University

Clayton Hess
President
Lincoln Memorial University

Candice McQueen
President
Lipscomb University

Bryan F. Coker
President
Maryville College

Christopher P. Hulin
President
Middle Tennessee School of Anesthesia

Sidney A. McPhee
President
Middle Tennessee State University

Bill Greer
President
Milligan University

Skip Redmond
President & CAO
Moore Tech

Michael Torrence, Ph.D.
President
Motlow State Community College

Shanna L. Jackson
President
Nashville State Community College

Bethany Bullock
President
Northeast State Community College

L. Anthony Wise, Jr.
President
Pellissippi State Community College

Carroll D. Stevens
Interim President
Rhodes College

Chris Whaley
President
Roane State Community College

Ken Shaw
President
Southern Adventist University

Dr. Tracy D. Hall
President
Southwest Tennessee Community College

Stewart Smith
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Athens

Dr. Youlanda Jones
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Covington/Ripley/Newbern

Stephen Milligan
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Crump

Dean Blevins
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Elizabethton

Danice Turpin
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Harriman

Dr. Kelli Kea-Carroll
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Hohenwald

Debbie J. Petree
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Jacksboro

Jeff Sisk, Ed.D.
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Jackson

Dwight Murphy
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology
Oneida/Huntsville

Dr. Laura Monks
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology-
Shelbyville

Arrita W. Summers
President
Tennessee College of Applied Technology-
Dickson

Dr. Glenda Glover
President
Tennessee State University

Philip B. Oldham
President
Tennessee Tech University

Harley Knowles
President
Tennessee Wesleyan University

M. David Rudd
President
The University of Memphis

Steve Angle
Chancellor
The University of Tennessee at
Chattanooga

Keith Carver
Chancellor
The University of Tennessee Martin

Steve Schwab
Chancellor
The University of Tennessee Health Science
Center

Mark La Branche
Chancellor
The University of Tennessee Southern

Carol G. Puryear, Ed.D.
President
TN College of Applied Technology –
Murfreesboro

Dan Boone
President
Trevecca Nazarene University

Scott Hummel
President
Tusculum University

Donde Plowman
Chancellor
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Reuben E. Brigety, II
Vice-Chancellor
University of the South

Dr. Orinthia Montague
President
Volunteer State Community College

Tony Miksa
President
Walters State Community College

Edward Smith
President
Williamson College