October 1, 2021

Senator Chris Murphy  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Richard Blumenthal  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Joe Courtney  
2449 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Rosa DeLauro  
2413 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Jahana Hayes  
1415 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Jim Himes  
2137 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative John Larson  
1501 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of Connecticut’s Congressional Delegation,

On behalf of the Connecticut Presidents’ Council, we write to ask you to use the budget reconciliation process to establish the pathway toward doubling the Pell Grant maximum to $13,000. Providing a generational increase in the Pell Grant maximum in the final reconciliation bill would transform the educational trajectory of students everywhere.

The Pell Grant program is the nation’s foundational investment in higher education. In Connecticut, Pell Grants help nearly 80,000 low- and moderate-income students attend and complete college annually. Students attending every institution on this letter from every city in our state rely on the Pell Grant program to build their future.

Doubling the Pell Grant is the most effective, efficient, and equitable way to tackle college affordability and debt for low- and middle-income students and it can happen immediately. By expanding an existing and successful program, increased grant aid can reach students quickly and help speed up our nation’s recovery from the pandemic.
A recent study released by the Gender Equity Policy Institute found that if Congress doubles the Pell Grant award to $13,000, borrowers with an average student debt load of $33,342 will see their debt cut in half or more. Bachelor's students who receive the maximum award will see a 79% reduction in their debt, and community college students who receive the maximum award will graduate debt-free, according to the report.

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted low-income families and, accordingly, it has also impacted low-income students pursuing a post-secondary education. Enrollment is down in higher education and, nationwide, financial aid applications are down 6% for low-income students. Congress must take bold steps to make college more accessible for students and families with need in all sectors by Doubling Pell now.

The higher education sector in Connecticut stands ready to assist you in this collective effort to ensure this program can continue to transform the lives of the students we serve.

Sincerely,

President Rhona Free
University of Saint Joseph
Co-Chair, CT Presidents’ Council

President Terrence Cheng
Connecticut State Colleges & Universities
Co-Chair, CT Presidents’ Council

Presidents’ Council Members:

President Marc Camille
Albertus Magnus College

President Elsa Nunez
Eastern CT State University

President Katherine Bergeron
Connecticut College

President Mark Nemec
Fairfield University

President Zulma Toro
Central CT State University

President Mark Scheinberg
Goodwin University
President Tracy Espy
Mitchell College

President Judy Olian
Quinnipiac University

President John J. Petillo
Sacred Heart University

President Joe Bertolino
Southern CT State University

President Joanne Berger-Sweeney
Trinity College

President Danielle Wilken
University of Bridgeport

Interim President Andrew Agwunobi
University of Connecticut

Interim Leader Mark Boxer
University of Hartford

President Steven Kaplan
University of New Haven

President Michael S. Roth
Wesleyan University

President John Clark
Western CT State University

President Peter Salovey
Yale University