

October 9, 2019

The Honorable Ann McLane Kuster  
United States House of Representatives  
320 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fred Upton  
United States House of Representatives  
2183 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kim Schrier  
United States House of Representatives  
1123 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Burchett  
United States House of Representatives  
1122 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harley Rouda  
United States House of Representatives  
2300 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kuster, Upton, Schrier, Burchett, and Rouda,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing in support of the *Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act of 2019* (H.R. 3334). We applaud your commitment to improving access to, and affordability of, graduate and professional education. This legislation will help ensure that individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those from low-income and underrepresented communities, can pursue a master's or doctoral degree.

National indicators show that the number of graduate students who received Pell as undergraduates continues to grow.<sup>1</sup> According to most recent data, nearly 46 percent of first-year graduate and professional students were former Pell recipients. However, nearly 35 percent did not fully exhaust all 12 semesters of Pell Grant awards.<sup>1</sup> Under H.R. 3334, graduate students who received Pell as undergraduates would be allowed to continue utilizing the program towards their first postbaccalaureate degree, provided that they have remaining Pell semesters leftover and remain income-eligible. This would offer a significant financial benefit to a segment of students most in need of support.

As the U.S. population continues to diversify, the needs of our communities and the workforce reflect those changing demographics. Additionally, occupations requiring a master's degree or higher at entry-level are among the fastest growing our economy over the next decade.<sup>2</sup> H.R. 3334 would modernize the Pell Grant to meet these demands by supporting the pipeline of future professionals.

Furthermore, this legislation upholds the mission of Pell in providing access to economically disadvantaged and historically underserved populations. Enacting it would have several advantages for students, families, and the economy. It could further incentivize timelier completion of an

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<sup>1</sup> Data compiled from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). Occupational outlook handbook. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.

undergraduate degree, while also limiting the reliance on student loans at the graduate level. This is noteworthy considering former Pell recipients in graduate school are more likely to borrow and tend to carry larger amounts of undergraduate debt as compared to non-Pell recipients.<sup>1</sup>

Again, we thank you for introducing the *Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act* and applaud your leadership on this critical issue. If you have any questions, please contact CGS's Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs, Lauren Inouye, at [Linouye@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:Linouye@cgs.nche.edu) or (202)-461-3864.

Sincerely,

AccessLex Institute  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Council of Graduate Schools  
Council on Social Work Education  
National Association of Colleges and Employers  
National Association of Graduate-Professional Students  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Education Association  
Physician Assistant Education Association