



**The Education Trust**

Closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-k through college.

## Written Testimony for the Record

On behalf of John B. King Jr.  
President and CEO  
The Education Trust

Before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

May 31, 2019

On behalf of The Education Trust, an organization dedicated to closing long-standing gaps in opportunity and achievement separating students from low-income backgrounds and students of color from their peers, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the FY20 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (L-HHS-ED) Appropriations bill.

Before discussing specific appropriations priorities, the Education Trust would like to highlight our support for the substantial increase of statutory budget caps for FY2020 and 2021, specifically to prevent damaging cuts to non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending. Within those increased caps, the Labor-HHS-ED appropriations bill should remain a priority and receive, at minimum, an increase proportional to the overall NDD increase.

While there are many programs under your jurisdiction that are critical to advancing equity, for FY20, The Education Trust is focused on the following: strengthening the Pell Grant program by increasing the maximum award to at least \$6,345; supporting teachers and school leaders by level funding ESSA's Title II-A (\$2.055B), the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (\$200M), the Supporting Effective Educator Development Program (\$75M), HEA's Title II's Teacher Quality Partnership grants (\$43.1M); and restoring funding to the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program (\$14.5M). We are encouraged by the funding levels provided by the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (L-HHS-ED) for some of these initiatives and urge continued support for these critical programs.

### **1. Strengthening the Pell Grant Program**

The Pell Grant program is the cornerstone of federal financial aid. [Created](#) in 1972 as the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant, the program [benefits](#) over 7 million students annually and continues to serve as the primary federal effort to open the door to college for students from low-income backgrounds. Over one-third of White students, two-thirds of Black students, and half of

Latino students rely on Pell Grants every year.<sup>1</sup> Pell Grant dollars are well-targeted to those in need: 83 percent of Pell recipients come from families with annual incomes at or below \$40,000, including 44 percent with annual family incomes at or below \$15,000.<sup>2</sup>

### *Increasing the Maximum Award*

The Pell Grant program's impact is shrinking as the maximum award has failed to keep pace with the rapidly rising cost of college. The purchasing power of the Pell Grant has dropped dramatically since the program's inception. In 1980, the maximum Pell Grant award [covered](#) 76 percent of the cost of attendance at a public university. Today, it covers just over 28 percent, the [lowest](#) portion in over 40 years. If the maximum award continues to stagnate, the grant will [cover](#) just one-fifth of college costs in 10 years.

We very much appreciate previous increases to the maximum award in prior omnibus appropriations bill, and we respectfully request that you continue to increase the maximum award amount. **For FY20, Congress should increase the maximum award to at least \$6,345 to keep pace with inflation.** We also ask Congress to use HEA reauthorization to enact an ambitious plan to reverse the downward trend of Pell's purchasing power through proscribed funding increases and expansion of the mandatory funding stream, [ensuring that the maximum Pell award covers at least half of the cost of attendance](#) at a public four-year institution.

## **2. Supporting Teachers and School Leaders**

[Research](#) and experience show the powerful impact that teachers and school leaders have on student learning. ESSA's Title II program provides grants to states and districts that can be used to invest in the education profession. These funds can be used to, among other things, address inequities in access to effective teachers and school leaders, provide professional development, and improve teacher recruitment and retention. States and districts can also apply for additional competitive grant dollars for programs targeted at specific, evidence-based strategies for improving teacher and school leader effectiveness and increasing educator diversity. Additionally, HEA's Title II's Teacher Quality Partnership grants (TQP), awarded to partnerships of high-need districts and teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education, can be used to recruit underrepresented populations to the teaching profession. As Ed Trust's [work continues to demonstrate](#) the positive impact that diverse teachers and school leaders of color can have on the academic achievement of both students of color and White students, we remain supportive of federal dollars to increase and bolster the diversity of the educator pipeline.

*Maintain funding for ESSA Title II-A (Supporting Effective Instruction), the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (TSLIP), the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program, and HEA Title II Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants*

Despite the nationwide attention to the need to invest in educators, the President's FY20 budget request again called for the elimination of the Title II-A grant, the SEED program, and HEA Title II

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Budget Office (CBO), January 2017 baseline projections for the Pell Grant program, <http://bit.ly/2mLy0nk>, Table 2; and Ed Trust calculation NPSAS:12 using PowerStats.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell-data.html>

Teacher Quality Partnership grants. We appreciate Congress' rejection of these requests in the FY19 omnibus appropriations bill. **At a minimum, in FY20, Congress should continue funding Title II-A, TSLIP, SEED, and TQP at FY19 levels: \$2.055B, \$200M, \$75M, and \$43.1M, respectively.**

*Restore Funding for the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program*

Landmark [research](#) funded by the Wallace Foundation has found “virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader,” and the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program is the *only* federal program specifically focused on investing in evidence-based, locally driven strategies to strengthen school leadership in high-need schools. [A recently concluded seven-year study of school districts](#) that created pipelines to develop school leaders saw increasing gains in student achievement over time, showing how a sustained initiative [can demonstrate positive effects on student learning](#).

During the past decade, we have learned a lot about what works in education leadership —lessons made possible, in part, by federal investments in the School Leader Program (the previous iteration of the SLRSP). There is still a great deal of work to do, especially when it comes to identifying and efficiently preparing effective turnaround leaders, as well as sustainably supporting them to accelerate academic achievement, close gaps, and maintain improvement over time for *all* students and in *every* community. The SLRSP is a key lever for seeding the next generation of effective school leader development programs, promoting equity, advancing ongoing innovation, and sharing cutting-edge lessons on transformational leadership with the broader field.

**For FY20, Congress should restore funding for the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program to \$14.5M, its FY17 appropriation level.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, and The Education Trust is happy to respond to any questions or concerns.