



March 19, 2026

Alamo Colleges District

Dallas College

Lone Star College

Louisiana Community and
Technical College System

Metropolitan Community
College

Tarrant County College

Virginia Community College
System

Wisconsin Technical College
System

The Honorable Susan Collins
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Senate Appropriations LHHS Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
House Appropriations LHHS Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Senate Appropriations LHHS Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC), I urge the Committee to address the projected shortfall for the Pell Grant program as part of the FY 2027 appropriations process. As projected by the Congressional Budget Office, the Pell Grant shortfall for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 is predicted to reach \$5.5 billion, climbing to \$17 billion in FY 2027. The Pell Grant plays a critical role in enabling students across the nation, including those at community colleges, to access higher education. Further, we urge the Committee to take steps to remedy the shortfall before the House and Senate break for the November elections.

RAMC represents more than 75 community colleges and approximately 1 million students nationwide. Community colleges serve 45 percent of all first-time freshmen and 40 percent of our students are first-generation college students. Community colleges are open access, seek to make higher education accessible and affordable for everyone and match employers' need for a larger, more workforce. To meet this need, RAMC is committed to ensuring that students have access to the financial aid that they need to be able to access a community college education, allowing them to chart a path to the middle class.

For this award year, there are estimated to be 7.2 million Pell Grant recipients, of which approximately 25% will be community college students. Many of these students are low-income and first-generation students who rely on Pell Grant funding to attend college. Further, with the upcoming implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant, it is even more essential that Congress fully funds the Pell Grant shortfall so that more

students can access the financial aid they need to pursue short-term programs and gain the in-demand skills needed to meet workforce needs. Without Congressional action, the \$17 billion in predicted Pell Grant shortfall for FY 2027 could lead to cuts in the maximum Pell Grant. This will make it increasingly difficult for students to access higher education, even at low-cost community colleges.

For the FY 2026 Pell Grant, RAMC strongly urges Congress to increase the FY 2027 302(b) allocation provided to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHSED) to cover the immediate FY 2026 and FY 2027 shortfall without the need for any reductions in LHHSED spending or spending in other Subcommittee bills. This would allow the Senate and House Subcommittees to respond to the immediate threat that the shortfall may present – a reduction in the maximum Pell grant for the 2027-2028 award year.

Furthermore, as Congress maps out its agenda for the spring and summer, we also urge that a solution for the Pell Grant program be achieved before Members break for the November elections. The U.S. Department of Education (ED), as it has done in past years, would be expected to inform institutions of the maximum Pell grant for the 2027-2028 award year in January 2027. Congress failing to act before Members depart for the November election would leave only a few short weeks in November and December for Congress to fund the shortfall before ED's January announcement. If faced with a \$17 billion shortfall in January 2027, ED may have to announce a cut in the maximum Pell grant. Such a step would be devastating for students seeking to finance the education they will start or continue only a few months later. The Committee should consider a supplemental appropriations bill, or the anticipated September 2026 continuing resolution, if needed, to ensure such funding is provided before the final weeks of 2026.

Thank you for considering our views on this important topic. A remedy to the Pell grant shortfall will allow millions of low-income students to count on funding they need to chart a path to the middle class. Thank you for your consideration of RAMC's views.

Sincerely,



Monty Sullivan

Board President, Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)
Former President, Louisiana Community and Technical College System