



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 John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jefferies
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jefferies:

On behalf of Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC), I am writing to express RAMC's concern regarding the recent predictions from the Congressional Budget Office on the Pell Grant shortfall. The Pell Grant shortfall for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 is predicted to reach \$5.5 billion, and by FY 2027 the shortfall is predicted to climb to \$17 billion. The Pell Grant plays a critical role in enabling students across the nation, including those at community colleges, to access higher education. RAMC strongly urges Congress to fund the shortfall for the upcoming 2026 and 2027 years, and to support a long-term funding solution to the Pell Grant shortfall to ensure that students, for years to come, are able to rely on the Pell Grant. Further, we urge Congress 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 already \$17 billion in predicted Pell Grant shortfall for FY 2027 is set to

become even larger and 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.

To address the shortfall RAMC strongly urges Congress to take two steps. First, we urge 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.

Second, we urge Congress to provide Pell funding to ensure the long-term financial viability of the Pell Grant program beyond FY 2027. This could be accomplished by providing one-time mandatory funding through the LHHSED appropriation bill (funding that would not count against the Subcommittee's 302(b) allocation), a supplemental appropriations bill, or if needed, the continuing resolution that Congress would be expected to pass in late September. While the immediate need to fund the \$17 billion Pell Grant shortfall is clear, the Congressional Budget Office estimates this program will face shortfalls for years to come. This demands an investment of funding that will solidify the Pell Grant program beyond FY 2027 to ensure it's a dependable funding source for students for years to come.

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 expected 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.

We urge Congressional leadership to prioritize a remedy for the Pell grant shortfall in the coming months, recognizing that both the immediate \$17 billion shortfall must be filled as well as long-term funding stability provided for the program. This 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)
President, Louisiana Community and Technical College System