

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 08, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the ongoing crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. As we continue to work on the next legislative package, we strongly urge you to prioritize higher education funding to support today's students and tomorrow's workers. Specifically, we ask that you include at least \$175 billion more for the Education Stabilization Fund and set aside at least \$46 billion of this funding for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEER). We especially urge you to explicitly direct HEER funding for public and private nonprofit higher education institutions.

Colleges and universities across the country are already under dramatic financial constraints resulting from tuition and housing revenue losses. This loss in revenue is coupled with the rising costs of acquiring appropriate technology and platforms to facilitate online learning during COVID-19. We are grateful the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136) included \$14.25 billion for HEER, which granted relief for Institutions of Higher Education and their students.¹ While undoubtedly a step in the right direction, many nonprofit higher education institutions—both public and private—in our districts have informed us that additional aid is needed to meet their current challenges.

Moreover, research from ratings agency Moody's Investor Service shows that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have a negative impact on higher education institutions across the world — particularly on public institutions in the U.S.² Public and private nonprofit higher education institutions are vulnerable to budget cuts as States across the country face large budget shortfalls from the economic fallout from the pandemic. Additional HEER funding will provide the resources and flexibilities institutions need to continue educating their students and endure the impact of COVID-19.

¹Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. Public Law 116-136, 134 Stat. 281, 2020. Title VIII. Section 18004(a)(a) and 18004(c)

² Covid-19 puts pressure on higher education finances. *Moody's Investor Service*. 07 April, 2020. Accessed on 05 May, 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.moody.com/research/Moodys-Covid-19-puts-pressure-on-higher-education-finances--PBC_1222963

Likewise, students will benefit from supplementary HEER funding as it provides emergency financial aid grants to students whose lives have been disrupted, many of whom are facing financial challenges and struggling to make ends meet. Roughly 30 million Americans have filed unemployment claims since mid-March and the financial insecurity for many, including students, continues to grow.³ Receiving supplementary emergency grant funding may determine whether some students can afford to continue their studies. Recent polling from *Axios* and *College Reaction* found that of those current students with summer jobs lined up, nearly half of these opportunities have been canceled.⁴ Another survey found that almost 15 percent of students expressed doubt about returning to school in the fall if the current circumstances continue.⁵ Furthermore, more than two-thirds of public and private university presidents said they were very concerned that needy students would be disproportionately impacted as campuses responded to COVID-19.⁶ It is vital we take these concerns into consideration as we work to maintain equity in institutions of higher education.

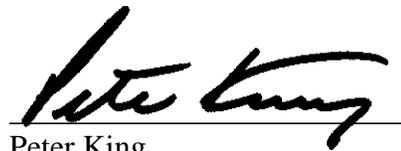
Given the uncertainties generated by COVID-19, additional HEER funding would serve as a bridge for students to reach the fall semester. Moreover, it will enable public and private, nonprofit higher education institutions to respond to the long-term financial strains of the outbreak.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to ensure that our nation's higher education system is fortified and prepared for the reopening of society in the months ahead.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Peter King
Member of Congress

³ The Numbers will be Terrible, How to Interpret them. *New York Times*. 06 May, 2020. Accessed on 07 May, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/business/economy/coronavirus-unemployment-jobs-report.html>

⁴ The Impact of COVID-19 on College Students. *College Reaction*. 12 April, 2020. Accessed on 05 May, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/456474196/College-Reaction-COVID-19-Report-2>

⁵ Impact of COVID-19 on Students' College Plans -Survey Report. *Cirkled in*. 26 March, 2020. Accessed on 05 May, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/education/higher-education-responses-to-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx>

⁶ Presidents Fear Financial, and Human, Toll of Coronavirus. Doug Lederman. *Inside Higher Ed*. 27, March, 2020. Accessed on 05, May, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/college-presidents-fear-financial-and-human-toll-coronavirus-their-campuses>