AICCU
ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT CALIFORNIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

September 3, 2025

The Honorable Josh Harder
U.S. House of Representatives
California District 9

The Honorable David Valadao
U.S. House of Representatives
California District 22

The Honorable Pete Aguilar
U.S. House of Representatives
California District 33

The Honorable Norma Torres
U.S. House of Representatives
California District 35

The Honorable Ken Calvert
U.S. House of Representatives
California District 41

The Honorable Mike Levin
U.S. House of Representatives
California District 49

Subject: AICCU Concerns Regarding the President's Proposed Budget and Impact on Higher Education and Workforce

Dear Members of the California House Delegation on the Committee on Appropriations:

On behalf of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU), I write to express our opposition to the cuts to research funding, federal financial aid, and student support programs, as the Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) funding bill. These cuts and elimination of entire programs would only serve to limit college access, drive up the cost of higher education for students, and ultimately impact the workforce development that California and the nation need, especially in healthcare fields, STEM, and teaching.

AICCU is the organizational voice for over 85 independent colleges and universities in California. Our member institutions are nonprofit, degree-granting, and are accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission. Together, the independent higher education sector enrolls over 184,000 undergraduate students (including over 47,500 Pell Grant students) and over 162,000 graduate students. Our campuses also serve as vital pillars in their communities by driving economic growth through employment, supporting local businesses through substantial spending, and enriching the cultural landscape with impactful programs that engage K-12 schools and beyond.

The LHHS bill seeks to:

- eliminate the Supplemental Educational Opportunities Grant (SEOG) program;
- severely cut the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program by nearly 40%;
- eliminate the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant program;
- cut the budget of the National Institutes of Health by $456 million, impacting critical research that helps us find cures to life-threatening diseases.

In recent years, there have been repeated proposals to cut or eliminate FWS and SEOG. Each time, Congress has rightly rejected these efforts. Eliminating these vital programs would force many students to take on additional debt, work, or leave college altogether. The elimination of FWS erases a critical opportunity for students to hold an on-campus job that not only teaches the value of work but also ensures that students are connected to their campus community. SEOG provides up to $4,000 in additional aid to a Pell Grant student helping them avoid extra loans or excessive off-campus work hours. SEOG is not duplicative of a Pell Grant; it complements students' Pell award by filling critical financial gaps where every dollar of aid makes a difference.

TQP grants allow institutions to foster partnerships between colleges and local elementary and secondary schools to improve teacher training, student achievement, and teacher recruitment and retention. Partnerships can focus on pre-baccalaureate "fifth year" teacher certification or teacher residency programs for recent graduates with strong academic backgrounds. At a time when the state and country need more teachers, the elimination of this program is counterproductive to producing more teachers.

We appreciate the effort to maintain Pell Grant funding at 2025 levels, as well as maintaining funding for TRIO programs and GEAR UP. We are also supportive of the $7 million increase in support to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority-serving institutions. We encourage the full Appropriations Committee to reject the cuts in the LHHS funding bill and, instead, adopt what Senate Appropriations Committee passed for their LHHS bill:

- Maintain the Pell Grant funding;
- Maintain Federal Work-Study;
- Preserve Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant;
- Maintain Teacher Quality Partnership program;
- Maintain TRIO and GEAR UP;
- Increase funding for NIH grants by $400 million.

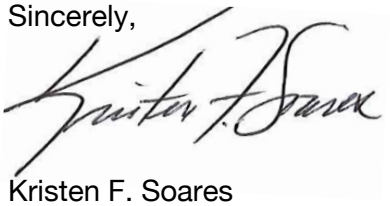
Independent California colleges and universities are committed partners in making college affordable. Between 2013 and 2023, institutional grant aid increased by 30% and now exceeds more than seven times the amount of state and federal aid combined. All the while, independent California institutions have worked hard to keep costs down, with net tuition and fees *decreasing* by $500 during this time period.

Today we are seeing increased skepticism about the value of higher education. This is troubling, since a college degree continues to be one of the most effective pathways to economic and social mobility, especially for first-generation and low-income students. While a degree may not be for everyone, for those who choose this path, it can be life changing.

These programs proposed for cuts and elimination are critical to the education and training of key workforce fields that California and the nation need, particularly if we are to stay competitive in the global arena. Students today are the teachers, engineers, scientists, nurses, mental health professionals, and doctors of tomorrow. We should ensure that students from all economic backgrounds can access higher education opportunities and improve their lives, their families, and their communities.

Thank you for considering our concerns. AICCU respectfully urges you to reject the cuts and elimination of these higher education aid and support programs as proposed in the House Appropriations LHHS funding bill. Together, we can ensure that all students—regardless of their background—have a fair chance to succeed and contribute to a brighter future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,



Kristen F. Soares
President