



**PHI THETA KAPPA HONOR SOCIETY**  
**Office of the President and CEO**

July 13, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate

**Re: Protect Pell Grants in FY 2027 Appropriations**

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chair Capito, and Ranking Member Baldwin:

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society is the largest academic honor society in higher education, serving approximately 230,000 active members at nearly 1,000 colleges across the United States and more than 4.4 million alumni. Membership is reserved for community college students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and met academic eligibility requirements established by their colleges.

As Congress considers funding the Pell Grant program for Fiscal Year 2027, Phi Theta Kappa surveyed students currently receiving Pell Grants to better understand how the program supports their educational goals. In just 48 hours, 2,653 verified Pell Grant recipients from community colleges across the United States responded. The average GPA of respondents was 3.79, and the average respondent was 30 years old, reflecting the growing number of adult learners balancing college with work and family responsibilities.

When asked what would be the most likely outcome if Pell Grant funding were reduced, the students' responses made one thing unmistakably clear: failing to fully fund the Pell Grant would have immediate consequences. **Nearly half said they would be forced to stop attending college.** Others said they would need to borrow more money, delay graduation, or work additional hours simply to continue their education. For these students, Pell Grants are far more than financial aid. They are often the difference between earning a college degree and leaving college before it is complete.

Who are these students? They are preparing to become nurses, teachers, engineers, technology professionals, business leaders, public servants, and skilled laborers who will strengthen our nation's workforce and economy. Nearly 62 percent are the first in their families to attend college. More than 60 percent work while enrolled, including nearly one-third who work full-time, and nearly one-third are raising children or serving as caregivers while pursuing their education. (See the full survey results here: <https://www.ptk.org/pell-grant-member-survey/>)

These students are not asking Congress to lower expectations. They are asking for the opportunity to continue meeting them. Every day, they balance work, family responsibilities, and financial challenges while pursuing the education needed to improve their lives and contribute to their communities. Fully funding the Pell Grant will help ensure that these students can complete their education and enter the workforce our nation depends upon. We respectfully ask Congress to:

- Fully fund the Pell Grant shortfall for Fiscal Year 2027.
- Establish a sustainable funding path that preserves the long-term strength and stability of the Pell Grant program.
- Provide sufficient funding so the Pell Grant program can be fully supported without reducing investments in other education and workforce programs that help students succeed.

Thank you for your longstanding bipartisan support of the Pell Grant program. We invite you to review the accompanying report, *The Students Behind the Pell Grant*, which provides a national snapshot of the community college students who rely on the Pell Grant to pursue their education and prepare for careers that strengthen our nation's workforce. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to expanding educational opportunity for America's students. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these findings with your staff or provide any additional information as Congress considers the FY 2027 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Tincher-Ladner", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lynn Tincher-Ladner, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
Phi Theta Kappa Honor