

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146-1 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 136
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Hart Senate Office Building, Room 125
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to ask you to continue Congress' strong support for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) in the FY 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill. It is currently funded at \$350,000,000. At a time when 65% of jobs will require some postsecondary training, ensuring that students are prepared for and succeed in higher education is essential for our nation's economic, civic, and social wellbeing. Yet for far too many students, postsecondary education remains out of reach. This cost-effective college readiness program has helped millions of low-income students progress on the pathway to college and build a more stable future for themselves, their communities and our nation.

Data shared by the U.S. Department of Education on the most recent sizeable class of GEAR UP students affirms the impact that the program is having on young people. GEAR UP high school graduates are enrolling immediately into postsecondary education at rates substantially higher (77.3% in 2014) than the national average for low-income students (45.5% in 2013). The GEAR UP program is truly a locally-driven, highly flexible model for closing achievement gaps and creating opportunity.

Given this success, a modest increase to GEAR UP funding to \$375,000,000 would allow the U.S. Department of Education to better meet the needs of communities nationwide and would help to ensure that states and communities can compete for new awards. GEAR UP has demonstrated tremendous success with over 700,000 students across a diverse range of backgrounds in large cities, rural areas, and everywhere in between, and is currently active in more than 3,800 secondary schools in 44 states across the nation. The proven model starts early in low-income middle schools and follows students through high school and into their first year of college. By incorporating scholarship funds, expanding access to rigorous academic courses,

tutoring, mentoring, financial literacy, and intensive college and career planning, GEAR UP builds college-going cultures in schools where even high school graduation cannot be taken for granted.

At a time of tight budgets, we have to invest every dollar responsibly. GEAR UP's proven track record, as well as its critical role in building our economy, makes it a truly worthwhile investment.

Sincerely,




Joe Manchin III
United States Senator




Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



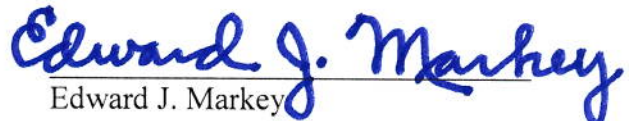
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator




Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



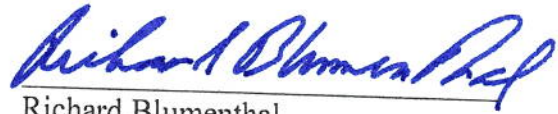
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



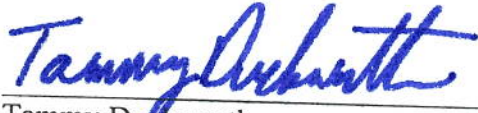
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



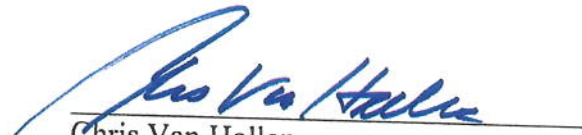
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



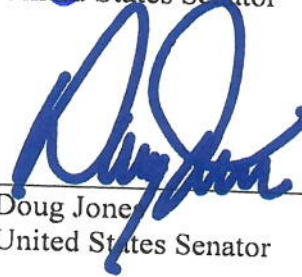
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United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Doug Jones
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



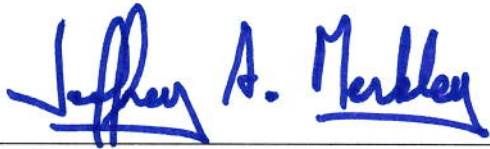
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