

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education Appropriations  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education Appropriations  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to thank you for your strong support of the Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) and to request that you continue to provide robust funding for these programs in the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. For the last several years, your Subcommittee has provided historic levels of support for the TRIO programs and the low-income, first-generation students they serve. As you prepare your FY 2021 appropriations bill, we ask that, once again, you prioritize the academic, financial, and social support services provided by TRIO and reject any proposals to consolidate, significantly change, or eliminate any of these programs.

TRIO helps to ensure that all students have equal access to a college education. The programs provide supports that help students prepare for, persist in, and graduate from higher education programs. Nationally, students from the lowest-income families are five times less likely to earn college degrees than those from the highest-income families. Thanks to TRIO, many low-income and first-generation students are able to change this trajectory and chart a new path.

During FY 2021, the Department of Education will host the next grant competitions for TRIO's Talent Search and Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) programs. Each of these programs provides pre-college assistance for students who would become the first in their families to earn a college degree.

The Talent Search program works with students in middle and high school to provide early exposure to the college and financial aid application processes. The program provides hands-on supports to help students engage in a college preparatory curriculum, prepare for college entrance examinations, find scholarships and other financial aid, and select the best colleges to suit their unique needs and aspirations. According to the most recent data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, students who participated in Talent Search enrolled in postsecondary education immediately following graduation at a rate that far exceeded that of low-income high school seniors who did not take part in the program. Talent Search, however, is only able to reach a fraction of the eligible population of low-income, potential first-generation college-goers.

The EOC program provides similar services, but focuses primarily on adult learners, including low-wage or displaced workers. EOC works with clients to provide assistance in college entry and re-entry, thereby addressing the challenges faced by students who have dropped out of high school or college. Quite often, EOC clients pursue higher education as a means of enhancing their

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families' economic viability. Recent analysis of EOC performance data found that more than half of "college-ready" students enrolled in institutions of higher learning and 71 percent of eligible EOC participants (high school seniors, postsecondary dropouts, etc.) applied to college. Unfortunately, EOC is able to serve only a fraction of eligible low-wage or displaced workers and high school dropouts.

We appreciate the Committee's continued and increased investment in TRIO. Given the programs' proven success and the ever-present need to address issues of access, affordability, and completion in students' higher education, we respectfully request your support of robust funding for TRIO in FY 2021 and urge you to reject any proposals to alter or eliminate these vital programs.

Sincerely,

/s/ Susan M. Collins  
Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

/s/ Jon Tester  
Jon Tester  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

/s/ Kevin Cramer  
Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy  
Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

/s/ Doug Jones  
Doug Jones  
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown  
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.  
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine  
Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper  
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

/s/ Maria Cantwell  
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

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/s/ Jeanne Shaheen  
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed  
Jack Reed  
United States Senator

/s/ James E. Risch  
James E. Risch  
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto  
Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

/s/ Debbie Stabenow  
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth  
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

/s/ Joe Manchin III  
Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse  
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

/s/ Margaret Wood Hassan  
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

/s/ Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen  
Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz  
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand  
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

/s/ Martha McSally  
Martha McSally  
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters  
Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

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/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders  
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar  
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons  
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner  
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono  
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

/s/ Kyrsten Sinema  
Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris  
Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin  
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

/s/ John Cornyn  
John Cornyn  
United States Senator

/s/ Mike Crapo  
Mike Crapo  
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich  
Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez  
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator