

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As you prepare a third economic relief package to alleviate the health and economic impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), we respectfully urge you to prioritize substantial financial support for students and institutions of higher education in order to mitigate the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on higher education in Massachusetts, which employs a significant share of the workforce in our Commonwealth, and to prevent the need for colleges and universities in Massachusetts and across the country to raise costs for students in any way.

Massachusetts is the birthplace of higher education in America. There are over one hundred colleges and universities in Massachusetts. These institutions include prestigious research universities, state public colleges, private liberal arts institutions, and community colleges. The sector employs a significant share of the workforce in Massachusetts and serves students from all of our communities, from across the country, and from around the world.

COVID-19 has jeopardized the health, learning, and livelihoods of millions of vulnerable students, and threatens to further destabilize the institutions of higher education upon which our nation depends, including colleges and universities in Massachusetts. Massachusetts colleges and universities have taken unprecedented steps to respond to the global pandemic, from identifying new ways to deliver classes online and implementing necessary campus-wide closures to helping lead the urgent search for COVID-19 treatment and a vaccine. Massachusetts public and private, nonprofit institutions have moved rapidly to protect countless students and employees across the Commonwealth.

As a result of COVID-19, colleges and universities in Massachusetts face significant losses in revenue and face new, unexpected costs. These institutions rely on tuition; an anticipated decline in international and domestic enrollment would be devastating. The Massachusetts higher education community needs timely stop-gap funding to continue operations, employment, teaching, and research. They also need resources to ensure that students do not face increases in costs, since the country's student debt crisis is likely to be exacerbated by this public health emergency.

We implore you to include vigorous financial assistance for students and higher education institutions in the forthcoming COVID-19 relief package. We ask you to prioritize the following measures:

1. **Emergency aid to students:** Students often depend on financial aid to be able to attend college. Any disruption to that aid would destabilize students and their families, who may have no other means of support. Colleges and students are both desperate for support to cope with their radically changed financial circumstances. The federal government needs to immediately provide additional support to students through need-based grant aid programs. We urge negotiators to include an emergency increase in grant aid to students to help students with financial need pay for things like transportation, food, and relocation assistance. We additionally request that student aid be retained regardless of COVID-19-related changes in enrollment, work status, or circumstances which would otherwise jeopardize aid eligibility.
2. **Emergency stop-gap funding for colleges and universities:** Colleges and universities in Massachusetts have been slammed with significant increases in costs associated with COVID-19, including cleaning costs, costs associated with transition to remote learning (training for faculty, hardware, software, and IT upgrades), and loss of grants and enrollment. It is critical for our local economy that Massachusetts colleges and universities not be forced to furlough or lay-off workers, faculty, and staff. We request robust stop-gap funding to support institutions as they deal with unprecedented disruption, lost revenue, and increased costs associated with such a rapid response to COVID-19, including costs associated with protecting and relocating students.
3. **Funding support for technology:** While the shift to remote instruction poses significant challenges to campuses, it remains the safest way to serve students at this time. Unfortunately, many Massachusetts colleges lack the capacity to rapidly transition to a remote instruction model. This is especially true at traditionally lower-resourced institutions, such as our community colleges and institutions with a high percentage of Pell recipients. Beyond the challenges facing schools, large numbers of students, by some estimates as high as 20%, do not have reliable access to online learning, either because they lack a capable computer or lack sufficient internet access. We urge you to provide grant funding to ensure that students and institutions are supported in the transition to high-quality online learning with regular and substantive engagement with qualified faculty, while also ensuring that students do not lose access to their educations as a result of the shift.

Thanks for all that you do and for your consideration of these requests. We thank you for your support of these critical investments in Massachusetts students and institutions of higher learning.

Sincerely,

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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

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Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

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Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

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Bill Keating  
Member of Congress