

# U.S. Rep. Pocan, colleagues: Introduce bill to double pell grant, make college more affordable

Posted on Wednesday, Jun 16, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

**WASHINGTON, DC**—Today, **Representatives Mark Pocan (WI-02)** and **Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03)**, chair of the House Education & Labor Committee, **and Senators Mazie K. Hirono (D-HI)** and **Patty Murray (D-WA)**, chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, reintroduced the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act, legislation that would double the Pell Grant award, index the award to inflation, and make other changes to expand the award for working students and families. The bill also makes the Pell Grant funding fully mandatory to protect it from funding shortfalls, expands the program to include DREAMers, and restores lifetime eligibility for the program to 18 semesters, among other changes that will benefit students.

“No one should be denied a chance at a higher education if they are smart enough and capable enough, but are unable to afford it. As a recipient of the Pell Grant myself, I know just how instrumental of a tool it is to make college accessible for all,” **Congressman Pocan said.** “Unfortunately, rising tuition costs and perpetual underfunding continues to undermine this critical program. The Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act would not only double the maximum Pell Grant, it would protect the program from future cuts, expand eligibility to include DREAMers, and ensure that postsecondary education is attainable for every student—regardless of their socioeconomic status.”

“The Pell Grant is the most important tool we have to help students afford college. Unfortunately, due to the rising cost of college, the purchasing power of Pell Grants has severely eroded over time,” **Chairman Scott of the House Committee on Education and Labor said.** “By doubling the maximum Pell award, and

adjusting future awards for inflation, the Pell Grant Preservation & Expansion Act will go a long way to restore the purchasing power and help millions of students earn a quality degree, without being forced to take on excessive debt.”

“Every year, Pell Grants make college more affordable for millions of students in the United States—including tens of thousands of students in Hawaii. But over the last decade, the value of the Pell Grant has steadily declined—from covering nearly fourth-fifths of the cost of attendance at a public, four-year institution at its height, to less than one-third,” **Senator Hirono said.** “With the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act, we have a real opportunity to restore the value of the Pell Grant for generations of students. I join my colleagues Senator Murray and Representatives Scott and Pocan in introducing this important legislation that will help more students pursue higher education.”

“It’s thanks to Pell grants that I was able to graduate and get a great education from Washington State University—but today’s students are being asked to pay more for college with less financial support. Students should never be forced to give up their higher education dreams because they can’t afford it—and this legislation will take a significant step in helping to make sure college is within reach for more students,” **Senator Murray said.** “I’m proud to introduce the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act alongside my colleagues, and I’ll be working hard to get this across the finish line and ensure that every student—no matter how much money their family makes—has the opportunity to succeed.”

Representative Scott and former Representative Susan Davis (D-CA), along with Senators Hirono and Murray, introduced a similar version of this legislation during the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. Last year, several provisions from that bill were included in the year-end spending package, which restored Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated individuals, students who have been defrauded, and students with drug-related offenses; raised the “auto-zero” threshold for the program; and increased the income protection allowance—improving the program for students.

In addition to Representatives Pocan and Scott, and Senators Hirono and Murray, the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act is cosponsored by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ed Markey (D-MA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Tina Smith (D-MN), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), and Representatives Jake Auchincloss (D-

MA), Joyce Beatty (D-OH), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Brendan Boyle (D-PA), Cori Bush (D-MO), Andre Carson (D-IN), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Joe Courtney (D-CT), Val Demings (D-FL), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Mike Doyle (D-PA), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), John Garamendi (D-CA), Raul M. Grijalva (D-AZ), Jahana Hayes (D-CT), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Mondaire Jones (D-NY), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Al Lawson (D-FL), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM), Andy Levin (D-MI), Doris Matsui (D-CA), Lucy McBath (D-GA), Grace Meng (D-NY), Kweisi Mfume (D-MD), Joseph Morelle (D-NY), Jerry Nadler (D-NY), Marie Newman (D-IL), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Deborah Ross (D-NC), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-MP), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Adam Smith (D-WA), Thomas Suozzi (D-NY), Eric Swalwell (D-CA), Mark Takano (D-CA), Bennie Thompson (D-MO), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Paul D. Tonko (D-NY), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), Peter Welch (D-VT), and Frederica Wilson (D-FL).

The following groups have endorsed the legislation: American Association of University Professors (AAUP), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), APIA Scholars, National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), National Education Association (NEA), State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), Student Debt Crisis, Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCFF), Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Association of Young Americans (AYA), The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS), Third Way, Young Invincibles, College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), American Council on Education (ACE), JFF, PIRG, Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), Association of American Universities (AAU), Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, National College Attainment Network (NCAN), Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU), American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), The Education Trust, UnidosUS, and the

University of California System.

The Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act bill text is [available here](#). A bill summary is [available here](#).