

July 22, 2019

Dear Senator/Representative,

We write on behalf of 6 of Illinois' leading universities to urge you to support a bipartisan, bicameral agreement to raise federal spending caps for fiscal years 2020 and 2021, in order to prevent budget cuts that would harm our students, employees and state.

As you know, the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA) has resulted in strict and potentially damaging caps on discretionary spending, which makes up roughly one-third of the federal budget. The BCA caps, which apply to both defense and non-defense discretionary spending, are enforced by across-the-board spending cuts, or sequestration. In past years, Congress and the White House have reduced—but not eliminated—the impact of sequestration by raising the BCA caps to more responsible levels, generally for two-year periods. Absent such an agreement, discretionary spending will be slashed by \$126 billion in FY2020 and \$99 billion in FY2021.

Sequestration would drastically reduce funding for key federal programs that support students, faculty and innovation at our universities. Sustained federal investment in research and higher education is vitally important to American competitiveness and to economic and national security. Federal support enables our universities to supply the next-generation workforce and research discoveries that drive progress, and cuts would have drastic consequences.

Without an agreement to raise the BCA caps, funding would shrink for critical financial aid programs that our students rely on, including the Supplemental Opportunity Education Grant (SEOG) program and Federal Work-Study (FWS). In Illinois, nearly 50,000 students received \$36.6 million in SEOG funds and more than 27,000 students received \$52.5 million in FWS funds during the 2017-2018 academic year. Sequestration would reduce much-needed funds for these students, making college less accessible. Sequestration would also increase origination fees on federal student loans. Over 545,000 Direct Loans were disbursed in Illinois last academic year, totaling \$4.1 billion.

Sequestration would also cut \$5.1 billion nationally from core federal research agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Energy, according to data from the nonpartisan Science Coalition. In Illinois alone, sequestration could cut \$219.1 million from federally supported research funding next year. These cuts would have a devastating impact on the ability of our faculty to advance economic growth and workforce development through technological improvements and cutting-edge research.

As the FY2019 fiscal year draws to a close, it is imperative that Congress and the White House act now to provide sequestration relief, and to prevent further delays to the FY2020 appropriations process. We recognize the challenges you face and appreciate your attention to our concerns. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,



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