



Office of the President  
364 Henry Administration Building  
506 South Wright Street  
Urbana, IL 61801-3689

Timothy L. Killeen  
*President*

January 14, 2019

Dear Senator/Representative,

As the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress gets underway, I am writing to offer our support and resources, and to outline the University of Illinois System's federal legislative priorities for 2019. With nearly 86,000 students and 25,000 faculty and staff spread across our universities at Chicago, Springfield and Urbana-Champaign, we have a wealth of ideas and expertise that we are eager to share with you. We are particularly proud of our role as an engine for statewide and regional economic development. As you may know, the U of I System contributes \$17.5 billion annually to the state's economy, and we support more than 171,000 jobs, or one out of every 46 jobs in Illinois.

I look forward to working with you on the issues discussed below and on other shared priorities as we partner to support students, higher education and economic growth in our state and country.

### **Providing Strong Funding for Research**

To foster the groundbreaking innovation that will move America forward, it is essential that Congress continues to provide robust funding for research. The U of I System is one of the leading research institutions in the country, with over \$500 million annually in research funding from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the National Endowment for the Humanities and other federal agencies. Urbana-Champaign routinely leads the nation in NSF grant awards, and in the 50 years since NEH's founding, institutions in the state of Illinois received more funding than those of any other state in the Midwest.

We are deeply concerned about the impact of the current partial government shutdown on federally sponsored research. In addition, as you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year 2020, we ask that you support federal agencies that fund vital research. As part of that effort, we strongly urge Congress to work with the President to raise the Budget Control Act caps on discretionary spending.

### **Enhancing Higher Education Affordability and Access**

The U of I System is committed to providing Illinois students a world-class education at a reasonable cost. This fall brought our fourth straight year of tuition freezes for in-state undergraduate students, and we have increased institutional financial aid from about \$84 million to more than \$219 million over the last decade. Our commitment to access is reflected in the fact that 22 percent of our undergraduates are the first in their family to attend college. Four out of five undergrads across the system are Illinois residents.

As Congress considers reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, we look forward to working with you to ensure that legislative proposals enhance student affordability and access. In particular, the U of I System supports simplification of loan repayment options and elimination of direct loan origination fees. With U of I students receiving \$80.2 million in Pell grants in Fiscal Year 2017, the Pell grant program is a cornerstone of financial aid. We hope Congress will maintain mandatory and discretionary funding for the Pell grant, and prioritize extension of Pell mandatory inflation adjustments.

We also encourage Congress to maintain graduate student loan options, strong repayment terms, and loan forgiveness benefits that put graduate and professional studies within reach for all interested students. Additionally, we ask that Congress protect the TRIO and GEAR UP programs, which encourage and support access for low-income and first-generation students to higher education.

### **Ensuring Safe, Welcoming Campuses**

The U of I System is committed to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for students, employees and visitors to our campuses. We are concerned about the U.S. Department of Education's recent proposed changes to federal enforcement of sexual misconduct under Title IX, and will provide feedback to the department after fully reviewing the proposals. We hope the federal government ultimately will partner in our efforts, and those of other universities, to eradicate sexual misconduct through prevention, education and training, and to support and protect our campus communities consistent with state law.

We are also closely monitoring reports that the Administration may be seeking to issue a new federal definition of gender, and share the concerns that have been expressed by leading higher education associations about such a change.

### **Allowing the Best and Brightest from around the World To Study and Work in Illinois**

The U of I System is committed to providing educational opportunities for qualified and deserving students, and we strongly support the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The Administration's decision to end DACA and subsequent legal challenges have created tremendous anxiety and uncertainty for current and prospective students. Accordingly, we urge Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform that includes the DREAM Act and expands visa and citizenship opportunities for STEM graduates.

Among other things, our immigration system should ensure that talented students and faculty from around the world can continue to make important contributions to our state. International students enrolled in universities across the state of Illinois spent more than \$1.8 billion during 2017-18 and supported nearly 25,000 jobs. Their presence adds to the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives in our student body, provides a richer cultural and academic experience for all, and supports pioneering research.

### **Incentivizing Innovation and Economic Growth**

The U of I System and partner institutions from across the state and world have launched an ambitious collaborative institute in Chicago. Seeded with a \$500 million capital appropriation from the General Assembly, the Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) will bring together over 90 top faculty, and more than 1,800 undergraduate and graduate students to address real-world problems, develop industry-changing technologies, connect entrepreneurs with venture capital, and spur economic growth throughout Illinois, contributing at least \$435 million in added income for the state. DPI has four key themes—computing and data, environment and water, food and agriculture, and health and wellness—which it will examine through the lens of how they impact and interact with culture and society, education and workforce development, entrepreneurship and technology transfer, and public policy. DPI will anchor a statewide

network of economic development hubs, known as the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN); five IIN hubs have already been announced, and more are in the works.

We look forward to providing further updates on DPI and IIN, and discussing ways in which the federal government can support and benefit from this groundbreaking initiative.

### **Maintaining Illinoisans' Access to Health Care Coverage and Training**

The University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System (UI Health) provides comprehensive care, education, and research to the people of Illinois and beyond. Part of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), UI Health includes a 465-bed hospital, 21 outpatient clinics, and multiple Mile Square Health Center facilities, as well as seven UIC health science colleges.

As the only state-owned, public hospital in Illinois, UI Health depends on federal support. We urge Congress to avoid policy changes that could reduce federal funding to states or access for Medicaid patients, which could jeopardize care for populations most in need. We also urge continued support for the 340B prescription drug program. This program allows UI Health to leverage drug discounts from pharmaceutical companies to ensure patients can access care they otherwise would not receive, all at no cost to taxpayers. Potential changes to the 340B program could make it difficult for UI Health to provide access to drugs for patients, including those with complex and chronic diseases.

In addition, Graduate Medical Education (GME) funding is vital to our efforts to train the next generation of physicians, including the 1,169 residents sponsored by the UIC College of Medicine each year. Accordingly, we support continued federal funding for GME and indirect medical education to ensure access to care for future generations.

### **Maintaining U.S. Leadership in Science and Technology**

U.S. national and economic security depends upon our country's continued leadership in science and technology. The U of I System has an important role to play in this effort, building on our legacy of pioneering scientific and technological breakthroughs, including magnetic resonance imaging, light-emitting diodes, the first modern internet browser, antiretroviral medication and a new shingles vaccine. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign continues to be a leader in areas from supercomputing to cybersecurity, and is investing \$15 million in a campus center to accelerate quantum information science and engineering. We look forward to continued collaboration with Congress and the Administration as they support and accelerate research and development in these and other areas.

### **Rebuilding and Revitalizing Infrastructure**

As Congress considers proposals to invest in infrastructure, we hope that any legislation will recognize the critical role that universities can play. Specifically, we encourage Congress to strengthen core research infrastructure programs, advance next generation infrastructure research and technology, improve infrastructure resilience, ensure a 21st century infrastructure workforce, and expand research infrastructure. The U of I System recently entered into a partnership with the state university system in Missouri and Northwestern University to launch the Infrastructure Technology Resource Consortium (ITRC), which will advance initiatives to revitalize infrastructure by reducing construction time and increasing infrastructure lifespan. The U of I System would welcome the chance to share our research and policy recommendations developed at ITRC and our three universities with you.

**Reforming the Tax Code To Protect Students and Nonprofits**

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 included several provisions that are detrimental to our students, employees and non-profit mission. We encourage Congress to repeal the new unrelated business income tax (UBIT) on transportation and parking fringe benefits for tax-exempt organizations such as ours. Without changes, this provision would raise the U of I System's tax bill by approximately \$2.5 million in Fiscal Year 2019. We also support repeal of the gross income exclusion for interest on advance refunding bonds. Since 2004, the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois has advance refunded approximately \$921 million of tax-exempt debt. The Board's savings from these tax-exempt refundings was approximately \$64 million.

In the coming months, I look forward to speaking to you about these and other issues, and learning about your own legislative priorities. We would gladly host you or your staff on any of our campuses to show you firsthand what we do. If you have any questions or concerns in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact Paul Weinberger, Director of Federal Relations, at paulw3@uillinois.edu or (202) 624-7775.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Killeen', written in a cursive style.

Timothy L. Killeen