

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1060

To improve the Federal Pell Grant program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 22, 2015

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. SCHUMER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To improve the Federal Pell Grant program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Pell Grant Protection
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

7 The purpose of this Act is to restore the role of Fed-
8 eral Pell Grants as the foundational Federal investment
9 in higher education, in order to strengthen the economy
10 of the United States by improving opportunities for low-

1 income students to complete higher education and join the
2 middle class.

3 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Federal Pell Grants provided under section
6 401 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
7 U.S.C. 1070a) (referred to in this Act as “Federal
8 Pell Grants”) have historically been the fundamental
9 Federal investment in helping low-income students
10 pay for college and enter the middle class.

11 (2) In the 1979–1980 academic year, the max-
12 imum Federal Pell Grant paid for 77 percent of the
13 average cost of attendance at an in-State, 4-year in-
14 stitution of higher education. However, in the 2014–
15 2015 academic year, the maximum Federal Pell
16 Grant covered less than one-third of that average
17 cost of attendance.

18 (3) The program providing Federal Pell Grants
19 already acts as a quasi-entitlement, in which both
20 mandatory funding and discretionary funding com-
21 bine to maintain a maximum Federal Pell Grant
22 amount.

23 (4) The Congressional Budget Office reports on
24 any overall financial surplus or shortfall in the fund-
25 ing provided for the Federal Pell Grant program.

1 However, in recent years, in order to meet the max-
 2 imum Federal Pell Grant level with the provided
 3 level of funding, Congress has made cuts to the pro-
 4 gram through imposing additional eligibility require-
 5 ments for Federal Pell Grants and limiting the avail-
 6 ability of year-round Federal Pell Grants, causing
 7 significant uncertainty and reducing access to higher
 8 education for millions of hardworking college stu-
 9 dents.

10 (5) Removing the Federal Pell Grant program
 11 from the uncertainty of the congressional discre-
 12 tionary appropriations process will improve student
 13 access to, and the affordability of, higher education.

14 **SEC. 4. FUNDING THE FEDERAL PELL GRANT PROGRAM**
 15 **THROUGH MANDATORY APPROPRIATIONS.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 401(b) of the Higher
 17 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a(b)) is amend-
 18 ed—

19 (1) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the
 20 following:

21 “(C)(i) For fiscal year 2016 and each succeeding fis-
 22 cal year, there are appropriated, out of any money in the
 23 Treasury not otherwise appropriated, such sums as may
 24 be necessary to provide, in combination with any amounts
 25 separately appropriated under subparagraph (A)(ii), Fed-

1 eral Pell Grants under this section in the amount specified
2 in subparagraph (A) to all eligible students.

3 “(ii) The amounts made available by clause (i) for
4 any fiscal year shall be available beginning on October 1
5 of that fiscal year, and shall remain available through Sep-
6 tember 30 of the succeeding fiscal year.”; and

7 (2) by striking paragraph (7).

8 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
9 subsection (a) shall apply with respect to Federal Pell
10 Grants awarded under section 401 of the Higher Edu-
11 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a) for award year
12 2016–2017 and each succeeding award year.

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