

**Auburn University • Louisiana State University • Mississippi State University •  
Texas A&M University • The University of Alabama • The University of Florida • University of Arkansas  
• University of Georgia • University of Kentucky • University of Mississippi • University of Missouri •  
University of South Carolina • University of Tennessee • Vanderbilt University**

May 17, 2017

The Honorable John Culberson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2161 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-4307

Dear Chairman Culberson,

As leaders of institutions in the Southeastern Conference (SEC), we write to thank you for your support and leadership on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Omnibus spending bill. More specifically, we thank you for your support of year-round Pell grants and the inclusion of a \$2 billion increase for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

As you know, Pell grants are awarded to the students in most need and are one of the most critical programs to help low-income and first generation students access and afford post-secondary education. Our institutions are committed to providing low-income students access and to helping them complete their undergraduate degree in a timely manner. Year-round Pell grants will give students the opportunity to complete their degree at a quicker rate, and lessen the amount of student debt upon graduation.

We are grateful to Congress for reaffirming the partnership between the federal government and American research universities that has resulted in extraordinary technological innovations over the past half century. In particular, the \$2 billion increase included for NIH builds on the sustainable and important increase included in the FY 2016 appropriations bill, and will ensure the continuation of important biomedical research across our campuses. Your commitment to basic research will boost our biomedical, energy, and national security enterprise and increase life and game changing breakthroughs to address national concerns such as autism, Alzheimer's disease, critical infrastructure security, and advanced manufacturing.

In the upcoming year, we urge Congress to continue to affirm this partnership by again making federal funding for scientific research a high priority. We look forward to working with you to advance and promote these critical priorities.

Sincerely,

Dr. F. King Alexander  
President  
Louisiana State University

Dr. Eli Capilouto  
President  
University of Kentucky

Dr. Stuart Bell  
President  
The University of Alabama

Joe DiPietro  
President  
University of Tennessee

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