

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Appropriations Committee  
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Appropriations Committee  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As your subcommittee develops the fiscal year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill, we respectfully request strong and continued support of the Federal TRIO Programs. The subcommittee's past support of TRIO has enabled low-income, first-generation students, as well as students with disabilities, to receive the academic, cultural, financial, and other supportive services needed to succeed in their college careers.


TRIO programs often make the difference in a student's ability to attend and complete a college program. In our nation's high-skilled, information-based economy, it is imperative to restore TRIO's capacity to reach more students. Today, TRIO serves 90,000 fewer students than it did a decade ago. This has resulted in fewer high school students receiving college coaching, experiential learning, and assistance in applying to and paying for college. It has deprived current undergraduates of academic tutoring, personal mentoring and advising, assistance with college transfer, and other retention services to ensure higher graduation rates. It has denied adult learners, including former servicemen and servicewomen, the opportunity to re-orient themselves to the classroom and gain the support necessary to balance higher education with the responsibilities of career and family.


While the number of students served by TRIO has diminished, the need for intensive supportive services for low-income, first-generation students has continued to grow. A report by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education found that as recently as 2013, students from high-income families were eight times more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree by age 24 than students from low-income families. TRIO helps turn the tide. Students who participate in its programs enroll, persist, and complete college at much higher rates than their socioeconomic peers. In this way, the TRIO programs serve as both the complement to and the insurance for federal financial aid programs like the Pell Grant.


The next fiscal year is ripe with opportunity as no fewer than four TRIO programs will undergo competitions for new grant awards. We hope you will continue to support economic

prosperity for all low-income, first-generation college students and students with disabilities by providing strong funding for the Federal TRIO Programs in fiscal year 2017.

Sincerely,

  
Susan M. Collins

  
Jon Tester

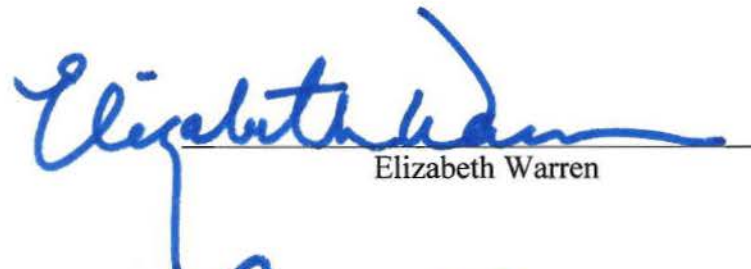
  
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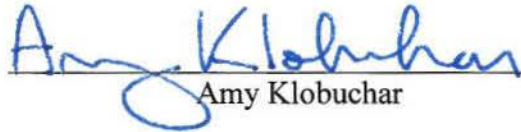
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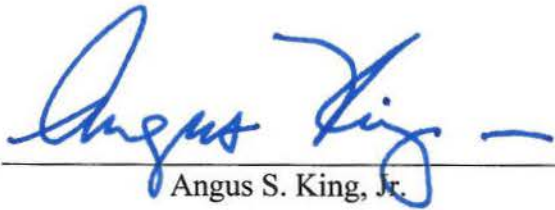
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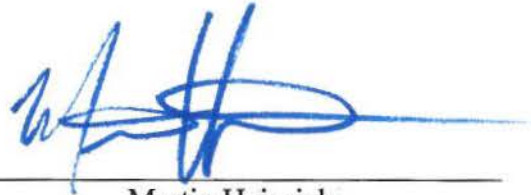
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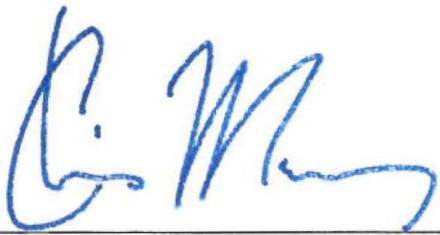
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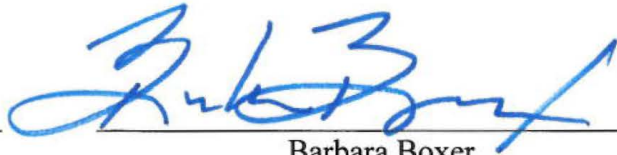
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