

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 136
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Room 125 Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chair Murray, and Ranking Member Blunt:

We want to thank the Subcommittee for your continued support and recognition of the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). As you consider the difficult and important work of appropriating precious public resources for the FY 2023 Labor, Health, Human Services and Education Subcommittee, we urge you to continue the Subcommittee's strong investment in GEAR UP and request that you provide robust funding for this program.

At a time where 65% of jobs will require some postsecondary training, ensuring that students are prepared for and succeed in higher education is essential for our nation's economic, civic, and social wellbeing. Yet for far too many students, postsecondary education remains out of reach. This cost-effective college readiness program has helped millions of low-income students progress on the pathway to college and build a more stable future for themselves, their communities and our nation.

Compounding this educational inequity, COVID-19 has dramatically impacted college-going rates for low-income students. This impact has been seen largely among first-time, first-year students, with National Student Clearinghouse reporting, "For graduates at high-poverty high schools there was a 32.6% decline in attending college, compared with a 16.4% decline for graduates of low-poverty schools." GEAR UP programs have showed their strength and success in the face of the new challenges faced throughout this pandemic, quickly pivoting to virtual advising, virtual tutoring, and more. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that higher education is still not accessible and attainable for all students.

Data shared by the U.S. Department of Education on the most sizeable class of GEAR UP students affirms the impact that the program is having on young people. GEAR UP high school graduates are enrolling immediately into postsecondary education at rates substantially higher (77.3% in 2014) than the national average for low-income students (45.5% in 2013). The GEAR UP program is truly a locally driven, highly flexible model for closing achievement gaps and creating opportunity.

Given this success, an increase to GEAR UP funding would allow the U.S. Department of Education to better meet the needs of communities nationwide and would help to ensure that states and communities can compete for new awards. GEAR UP has demonstrated tremendous success with nearly 570,000 students across a diverse range of backgrounds in large cities, rural areas, and everywhere in between, and is currently active in 43 states across the nation. The proven model starts early in low-income middle schools and follows students through high school and into their

first year of college. By incorporating scholarship funds, expanding access to rigorous academic courses, tutoring, mentoring, financial literacy, and intensive college and career planning, GEAR UP builds college-going cultures in schools where even high school graduation cannot be taken for granted.

At a time of tight budgets, we have to invest every dollar responsibly. GEAR UP's proven track record, as well as its critical role in building our economy, makes it a truly worthwhile investment.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator

/s/
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Tina Smith

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Raphael Warnock

Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ben Ray Lujan

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Alex Padilla

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Chris Murphy

Chris Murphy
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Jim Risch
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Bob Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Dick Durbin

Richard Durbin
United States Senator