

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos, Secretary
Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

We write to follow up with you on the status of disbursing funds appropriated under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help institutions of higher education as they continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that since the CARES Act was enacted on March 27, 2020, the staff at the Department of Education has been working diligently to distribute funds to eligible institutions. However, the delay in when institutions are actually able to drawdown funds has made it particularly difficult for students at community colleges. This is why we hope to work with you to expeditiously distribute funds to students and campuses.

With the second most confirmed COVID-19 cases in the nation, it is clear that New Jersey students have an immediate need for assistance. This need is likely even greater among students at community colleges as they have on average, the lowest incomes of higher education students.

While colleges and universities across the country are experiencing significant difficulties caused by the ongoing pandemic, these challenges are exacerbated for community colleges, which tend to have fewer resources, but needier students. Further, they may be less familiar with complex processes and systems within the Department.

The Department must act swiftly to streamline the administrative hurdles that institutions must pass to access funds available so that they can continue to operate and support students while responding to this ongoing crisis. We understand that Department has tried to establish guidance that includes flexibility and clarity. Given the disruptions this pandemic has caused, we hope that you will prioritize flexibility, expediency, along with accountability, that is consistent with language in the CARES Act.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter. We look forward to working with you to ensure that all students in New Jersey, and particularly community college students, are supported.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Andy Kim
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress