

We are writing on behalf of the 1200 members of the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Inc. (SASF AA). SASF AA is an association for financial aid professionals, lenders and state scholarship and guaranty agencies in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. We urge you, as a member of the Conference Committee on H.R. 3061/S. 1536, the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2002, to maintain the \$4,000 maximum award for the Federal Pell Grant program and to provide sufficient funds to fully pay for it.

Earlier in the Fall, the Congress overwhelmingly supported this increased award for the Pell Grant program. We believe this demonstrates recognition by Congress that education must be one of this nation's highest priorities and no qualified student should be left behind due to the lack of financial resources. The unprecedented increase in eligible Pell Grant applicants this year indicates that this message is being heard by the American public.

We recognize that the current Pell Grant shortfall makes the decision to keep a \$4000 Pell much harder but with the recent economic downturn, it is more critical than ever that Pell Grant be adequately funded.

There is no better investment than education and we thank you for your continued support for higher education and student aid funding.

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