

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1956

To improve the Federal Pell Grant program, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 22, 2015

Mr. HINOJOSA (for himself, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. KIND, and Ms. FUDGE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

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## A BILL

To improve the Federal Pell Grant program, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Pell Grant Protection  
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

7       The purpose of this Act is to restore the role of Fed-  
8 eral Pell Grants as the foundational Federal investment  
9 in higher education, in order to strengthen the economy  
10 of the United States by improving opportunities for low-

1 income students to complete higher education and join the  
2 middle class.

3 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Federal Pell Grants provided under section  
6 401 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20  
7 U.S.C. 1070a) (referred to in this Act as “Federal  
8 Pell Grants”) have historically been the fundamental  
9 Federal investment in helping low-income students  
10 pay for college and enter the middle class.

11 (2) In the 1979–1980 academic year, the max-  
12 imum Federal Pell Grant paid for 77 percent of the  
13 average cost of attendance at an in-State, 4-year in-  
14 stitution of higher education. However, in the 2014–  
15 2015 academic year, the maximum Federal Pell  
16 Grant covered less than one-third of that average  
17 cost of attendance.

18 (3) The program providing Federal Pell Grants  
19 already acts as a quasi-entitlement, in which both  
20 mandatory funding and discretionary funding com-  
21 bine to maintain a maximum Federal Pell Grant  
22 amount.

23 (4) The Congressional Budget Office reports on  
24 any overall financial surplus or shortfall in the fund-  
25 ing provided for the Federal Pell Grant program.

1       However, in recent years, in order to meet the max-  
2       imum Federal Pell Grant level with the provided  
3       level of funding, Congress has made cuts to the pro-  
4       gram through imposing additional eligibility require-  
5       ments for Federal Pell Grants and limiting the avail-  
6       ability of year-round Federal Pell Grants, causing  
7       significant uncertainty and reducing access to higher  
8       education for millions of hardworking college stu-  
9       dents.

10           (5) Removing the Federal Pell Grant program  
11       from the uncertainty of the congressional discre-  
12       tionary appropriations process will improve student  
13       access to, and the affordability of, higher education.

14       **SEC. 4. FUNDING THE FEDERAL PELL GRANT PROGRAM**  
15                           **THROUGH MANDATORY APPROPRIATIONS.**

16       (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 401(b) of the Higher  
17       Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a(b)) is amend-  
18       ed—

19           (1) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the  
20       following:

21       “(C)(i) For fiscal year 2016 and each succeeding fis-  
22       cal year, there are appropriated, out of any money in the  
23       Treasury not otherwise appropriated, such sums as may  
24       be necessary to provide, in combination with any amounts  
25       separately appropriated under subparagraph (A)(ii), Fed-

1 eral Pell Grants under this section in the amount specified  
2 in subparagraph (A) to all eligible students.

3 “(ii) The amounts made available by clause (i) for  
4 any fiscal year shall be available beginning on October 1  
5 of that fiscal year, and shall remain available through Sep-  
6 tember 30 of the succeeding fiscal year.”; and

7 (2) by striking paragraph (7).

8 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by  
9 subsection (a) shall apply with respect to Federal Pell  
10 Grants awarded under section 401 of the Higher Edu-  
11 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a) for award year  
12 2016–2017 and each succeeding award year.

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