

## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

June 17, 2021

**Contact:** Katherine Hazelrigg

(202) 461-3888/ [khazelrigg@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:khazelrigg@cgs.nche.edu)

### **CGS Champions Modernization of Pell Program with Reintroduction of the Expanding Access to Graduate Education Bill**

Washington, DC – The Council of Graduate Schools applauds the bipartisan reintroduction of the [Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act](#), introduced by Representatives Annie McLane Kuster (D-NH-02), Fred Upton (R-MI-06), Kim Schrier (D-WA-08), and Tim Burchett (R-TN-02). The legislation would provide graduate students, who received Pell Grant support as undergraduates, the ability to apply remaining semesters of Pell support towards a graduate degree, if they remain income eligible. CGS has championed this proposal to modernize the Pell program, thereby improving access and diversity within graduate education and strengthening the workforce.

Currently, the Pell Grant program is only available to undergraduate students, and eligible individuals can receive up to 12 semesters' worth of grant awards. However, a growing number of graduate students are former Pell recipients. According to the Department of Education, in Academic Year 2015-2016, nearly 46 percent of first-year graduate and professional students received some level of Pell support. While a greater number of students from lower socio-economic means pursuing graduate degrees is an encouraging indicator, over one-third of them did not use all 12 semesters of their grants. This bill would expand support for Pell recipients by encouraging timely completion of their undergraduate degrees and preserving an option for financial assistance through their graduate studies.

"The reintroduction of this legislation highlights a commitment to maximize the Pell Grant program and ensure that individuals with exceptional financial need can pursue higher levels of in-demand education," said CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega. "Since the COVID-19 pandemic, a lack of financial support is a top concern for prospective graduate students, particularly from underserved backgrounds, so it is paramount that our nation's investments include expanding access to more students from these communities."

"The high cost of graduate school is a barrier for many qualified and highly capable students from furthering their education and pursuing careers requiring an advanced degree," said Rep. Kuster. "The Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act will help level the playing field for post-graduate opportunities, reduce student debt, and ensure workers have the skills they need to help fill the jobs of the future — a win-win for students and our economy."

"It just makes sense to let Pell Grants carry over to graduate school," Rep. Burchett said. "This is a sensible way we can encourage folks to pursue their education whenever possible."

"The Pell grant provides considerable financial support to our student body. At the University of New Hampshire over 1,000 of our undergraduate students graduated with remaining Pell eligibility. Of those students, 112 have returned for graduate study. Extending Pell eligibility to graduate students would be enormously significant for those students who could be using Pell rather than taking on additional student debt," said Dr. Cari Moorhead, dean of the Graduate School at the University of New Hampshire.

"A well-trained workforce is essential for economic growth, and employers are demonstrating increased need for workers with graduate degrees. The Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act would provide increased access to graduate education for Americans wishing to pursue advanced degrees, said Dr. Dixie Thompson, vice provost and dean

of the Graduate School at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. “If passed, this Act would advance our commitment to workforce development and to greater access to graduate education regardless of a person’s socio-economic status.”

###

*The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of approximately 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. The organization’s mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.*