

For Immediate Release

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RECORD 56 BIPARTISAN SENATORS URGE CONGRESS TO PRIORITIZE ROBUST FUNDING FOR FEDERAL TRIO PROGRAMS

Federal TRIO Programs assist low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities as well as other marginalized groups prepare for and enter college.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 7, 2021)—The non-profit Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) announced today that a record 56 Senators joined a bipartisan “sign-on” letter urging the leaders of the Senate Appropriations Committee to prioritize robust funding for the Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) in Fiscal Year 2022.

Rooted in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and authorized by the Higher Education Act, TRIO programs provide academic support, personal mentoring and advising, as well as financial counseling to help first-generation and low-income students, as well as students with disabilities, military veterans, and other underrepresented students achieve their higher education goals.

“Across the nation, TRIO programs help to ensure that underserved students have equal access to a college education and the support they need to prepare for, succeed in, and graduate from higher education,” said **Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)**, Co-Chair of the Congressional TRIO Caucus. “I have long supported the TRIO programs and worked to ensure that they are reaching the students who need them most. The record number of bipartisan Senators who signed our letter in support of TRIO is an encouraging sign of the Senate’s continued commitment to these programs. Robust funding will ensure that low-income and first-generation students can achieve their dream of earning a college degree and unlocking their full potential.”

“I’ve always believed that quality public education is the great equalizer in this country,” said **Senator Jon Tester (D-MT)**, Co-Chair of the Congressional TRIO Caucus. “TRIO programs have a proven track record of helping students prepare for, excel in, and graduate from college. Ensuring our nation’s TRIO programs have the resources they need will help us continue to lift students up—no matter their background—and pave the way for our nation’s young leaders well into the future.”

With programs assisting students in virtually every pocket of the country, the breadth of TRIO’s reach manifests in the depth of its support across ideological lines. Support ranged from signers like former Republican Whip John Cornyn (D-TX) and Jim Risch (R-ID), who ranked among *National Journal’s* “15 Most Conservative Senators” to leading progressive Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL). First-generation status unites other TRIO supporters, including two freshmen Senators – first-generation college graduate Roger Marshall (R-KS) and the first TRIO alumnus to serve in the U.S. Senate, Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-

GA). Despite their membership on the Committee, many members of the Senate Appropriations Committee signaled their support by signing the letter as well.

“The TRIO program is proven to help students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds prepare for and succeed in higher education,” **said Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)**. “I support this bipartisan effort to make a strong investment in the TRIO program so even more young people can get the support they need to pursue higher education and reach their full potential.”

“The COVID-19 crisis has challenged every stage of our nation’s education system, thus making the need for targeted investments in TRIO all the more urgent,” **said Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)**. “I urge the Committee to continue to prioritize TRIO funding to help ensure students are prepared for, persist in, and graduate from college.”

“As the first in my family to graduate college, I know the life-changing impact of education,” **said Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)**. “Every student deserves the tools to succeed, and increased funding for federal TRIO programs would provide better access to education for more students. I will continue to fight for legislation like the *College for All Act of 2021*, which would provide \$3 billion for TRIO programs and serve 2.2 million more students. Through investments in student support programs, we can give students from all walks of life the tools and support they need to succeed.”

“Federal TRIO programs have helped thousands of Kansans enter and complete their college education,” **said Senator Roger Marshall (R-KS)**. “Through the various TRIO programs, a range of students, from military veterans, rural students, and low-income individuals, can receive assistance to progress through the academic pipeline, receiving the support and assistance they need to complete their studies. As a first generation college kid myself, I understand the challenge of working full time jobs while trying to balance the demands of academic life, and am proud to support TRIO programs.”

COE President Maureen Hoyler said, “TRIO is proof positive that our legislators can come together to assure educational opportunity will be in place for our nation’s low-income and first-generation youth and adult learners.”

For Fiscal Year 2022, [President Biden proposed](#) a \$200 million funding increase for TRIO, for a total appropriation of \$1.3 billion. If enacted by Congress, this increase has the potential to allow TRIO to provide approximately 150,000 more students with individualized college access and support services. This would bring the total number of low-income young people and adults aspiring to improve their lives and those of their families to nearly one million each year.

This record-setting bipartisan Senate letter follows [a record-setting bipartisan letter in which 248 members of the House of Representatives](#) signed on asking for a “robust increase” in TRIO funding.

Currently, five TRIO alumni serve in the U.S. Congress; they are Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA) and Representatives Gwen Moore (D-WI), Steven Horsford (D-NV), Ilhan Omar (D-MN),

and Nikema Williams (D-GA). Past TRIO alumni who have served in Congress include former Representative Henry Bonilla (R-TX).

The full letter text and list of Senate signers by state follow below. Download a pdf of the Senate letter [here](#).

Federal TRIO Programs Senate Funding Letter for FY22 – Full Text

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education Appropriations
136 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education Appropriations
156 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

We write to thank you for your strong support of the Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) and to request that you provide robust funding for these programs in the fiscal year (FY) 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. In recent years, the Committee has provided strong support for the TRIO programs and the students they serve: low-income, first-generation students, students with disabilities, homeless youths, students in or exiting foster care, military veterans, English learners, unemployed adults, and students in rural communities. As you prepare your FY 2022 appropriations bill, we ask that you prioritize the academic, financial, and social supports provided by TRIO so that these students can benefit from these life-changing services.

The COVID-19 crisis has challenged every stage of our nation's education system, thus making the need for targeted investments in TRIO all the more urgent. In fall 2020, the college enrollment rate of students from high-poverty high schools plunged nearly one-third lower than the year before. Meanwhile, U.S. Census data reported that students in low-income families are twice as likely to drop out of community college during this crisis. As TRIO programs seek to address these challenges, we urge the Committee to continue to prioritize TRIO funding to help ensure students are prepared for, persist in, and graduate from college.

In FY22, the Department of Education will host grant competitions for four TRIO programs: Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Veterans Upward Bound, and Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement. Upward Bound provides high school students with tutoring, mentoring and college counseling during the school year and a six-week residential college experience, all with the aim of improving college enrollment and attainment. Upward Bound Math-Science uses a similar model, with the goal of encouraging participants to pursue postsecondary degrees and careers in STEM fields. Veterans Upward Bound provides academic tutoring and counseling to help support military veterans' enrollment in and completion of postsecondary education. Finally, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program provides undergraduates with opportunities for research, internships, seminars, tutoring, and academic counseling, with the goal of students from disadvantaged backgrounds earning doctoral degrees.

We appreciate the Committee’s continued commitment to TRIO. Given the programs’ proven success and the need to address higher education access, affordability, and completion, we respectfully request your support of robust funding for TRIO in FY 2022.

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Susan Collins
United States Senator

Full List of Signers by State: Federal TRIO Programs FY22 Funding Letter

Senator First Name	Senator Last Name	State
Daniel	Sullivan	AK
Mark	Kelly	AZ
Kyrsten	Sinema	AZ
Dianne	Feinstein	CA
Alex	Padilla	CA
Michael	Bennet	CO
John	Hickenlooper	CO
Richard	Blumenthal	CT
Christopher S.	Murphy	CT
Thomas R.	Carper	DE
Christopher	Coons	DE
Jonathan	Ossoff	GA
Raphael	Warnock	GA
Mazie K.	Hirono	HI
Brian	Schatz	HI
Charles E.	Grassley	IA
Michael D.	Crapo	ID
James E.	Risch	ID
Tammy	Duckworth	IL
Richard J.	Durbin	IL
Roger W.	Marshall	KS
Bill	Cassidy	LA
Edward J.	Markey	MA
Elizabeth	Warren	MA
Benjamin	Cardin	MD
Christopher	Van Hollen	MD
Susan M.	Collins	ME
Angus	King	ME
Gary	Peters	MI
Debbie	Stabenow	MI
Amy	Klobuchar	MN
Tina	Smith	MN

Jon	Tester	MT
Kevin	Cramer	ND
Maggie	Hassan	NH
Jeanne	Shaheen	NH
Cory A.	Booker	NJ
Robert	Menendez	NJ
Martin T.	Heinrich	NM
Ben Ray	Lujan	NM
Catherine	Cortez Masto	NV
Jacklyn	Rosen	NV
Kirsten E.	Gillibrand	NY
Sherrod	Brown	OH
Jeffrey	Merkley	OR
Ron	Wyden	OR
Robert P.	Casey	PA
Jack	Reed	RI
Sheldon	Whitehouse	RI
John	Cornyn	TX
Tim	Kaine	VA
Mark	Warner	VA
Bernard	Sanders	VT
Maria	Cantwell	WA
Tammy	Baldwin	WI
Joe	Manchin	WV

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The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) is a nonprofit organization, established in 1981, dedicated to furthering the expansion of college opportunities for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities. Through its numerous membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies that host Federal TRIO Programs that help more than 800,000 low-income students and students with disabilities each year receive college access and retention services.