



The Commission on  
**INDEPENDENT**  
Colleges & Universities  
in New York



THE CITY  
UNIVERSITY  
OF  
NEW YORK

September 9, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor,  
And Pensions  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mike Lee  
Representative for Utah  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Representative for Hawaii  
U.S. Senate

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Senator Lee, and Senator Schatz:

On behalf of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) and the City University of New York (CUNY), we write in support of S.1074, the REAL Act of 2019. This important piece of legislation would lift the ban on Pell Grant eligibility enacted into law by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 and would restore Pell access to incarcerated individuals.

Private, not-for-profit college and universities and CUNY institutions educate 744,000 degree seeking students each year. There are programs currently in place across New York State's independent colleges and CUNY institutions that seek to foster educational success for those who are incarcerated. Such programs include Bard College's Prison Institute, which enrolls 300 incarcerated students full-time in programs that culminate in degrees from Bard College; Columbia University's Prison Education Program, which offers 11 courses at the Sing-Sing, Taconic, and Bedford Hills correctional facilities in New York; New York University's Prison Education Program, which offers coursework for an NYU Associate's Degree in Liberal Studies at Wallkill Correctional Facility; and CUNY John Jay College's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program which gives more incarcerated individuals the chance to study. CUNY John Jay College was one of 69 colleges, out of 200 that applied, that was chosen by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the program.

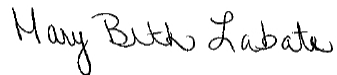
Similar programs providing higher education to incarcerated individuals exist at other independent institutions like Colgate University, University of Rochester, Hamilton College, Cornell University, Nazareth College, Manhattan College, Mercy College, Medaille College, St. Lawrence University, and St. Thomas Aquinas College.

Each of these institutions is committed to bringing the transformational powers of higher education to the incarcerated, and restoration of Pell Grants will enable these programs to continue the life changing services they deliver.

Higher education is a pathway toward a better life and should be available to everyone, including incarcerated individuals. Studies show that access to higher education reduces recidivism, reducing the costs of reincarceration and enabling incarcerated individuals to contribute to their communities during their prison term and after their release. Supporting a college degree for those in prison is the right thing to do for taxpayers and the incarcerated alike.

We ask for your support on this crucial piece of legislation and hope to see it passed. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Mary Beth Labate  
President  
CICU



Félix V. Matos Rodríguez  
Chancellor  
CUNY