



May 1, 2020

Dear Senators Bennet and Gardner and Representatives DeGette, Neguse, Tipton, Buck, Lamborn, Crow and Perlmutter:

Thank you for your continued support for Colorado's students and higher education institutions as we navigate the ongoing challenges associated with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Your advocacy helped secure much-needed funding for higher education within the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*. We are grateful for your efforts on our behalf.

Across Colorado, our institutions serve as an economic engine that drives innovation and trains the next generation of the state's workforce. Contributing more than \$20 billion to Colorado's economy, our institutions often serve **as the largest employer** in our respective regions with our education and training, research, and clinical footprint spanning across all four corners of the state. The current public health crisis has forced us to quickly adapt in order to meet the evolving needs of our campus communities, as well as serve as integral partners in the communities we call home. Despite the enormity of the situation, our students, faculty, and staff have shown tremendous strength in the face of growing uncertainty and we could not be prouder of how they have responded.

The global pandemic is unprecedented, and our state, localities and institutions are grappling with enormous financial challenges now and in the months ahead. While the CARES Act provided critical relief in the short term, there will be a need for additional resources to help mitigate current shortfalls as well as anticipated future lost business revenue. As Congress returns to Washington, D.C. to discuss ongoing relief measures, **we ask you – our congressional leaders – to urge your leadership to include additional financial support in the next coronavirus relief package for higher education, research, as well as additional financial support and flexibility for our state and local governments.**

#### Additional Aid for Students and Institutions

The CARES Act funding for higher education was an important first step towards helping to mitigate immediate losses in revenue from the early days of the pandemic. In total, Colorado received nearly \$75 million in direct relief for our students and institutions. **We are enormously grateful for those funds and for all of your efforts to secure them. However, our institutions collectively returned nearly \$89 million in housing, dining, tuition and fee refunds this spring alone.** With the inclusion of other costs, such as other lost business revenue, and costs related to remote learning expenses, etc., Colorado institutions of higher education face total COVID-19 related impacts of \$349 million from the pandemic so far this year. After the CARES Act funding, **Colorado's institutions still are facing a \$274 million shortfall for the remainder of the current academic year.** Looking ahead, we anticipate additional revenue declines stemming from disruptions to enrollment, research, auxiliary services, state funding cuts and other additional costs that could have catastrophic consequences on our institutions next fall and beyond. In addition, given the economic ripple effects throughout society, we anticipate students and their families will be particularly hard hit financially severely restricting their ability to pursue a postsecondary education. As we learned from the Great Recession over a decade ago, a postsecondary education serves as a catalyst for upward economic mobility and produces the next workforce pipeline for our state which underscores the importance investing in our students and our institutions.

**That is why we continue to urge Congress to provide an additional \$47 billion in emergency funding to be split between students and campuses, higher education centers and institutions of higher education. We urge lawmakers to direct student relief funds in the form of need-based financial aid and direct support for tuition, room and board, and fees. Finally, we urge Congress to consider direct assistance to institutions serving rural communities most impacted by the pandemic given their critical and unique role in the state's local and regional economies.** These funds will not only help shore up our institutions but also support Colorado's students, our economy and support critical jobs across our diverse communities.

#### Additional Support for Research

While COVID-19 research is in overdrive, other research labs and operations providing cutting-edge research support, training, and instrumentation on our campuses have slowed or shutdown as we rapidly adopted the physical distancing measures necessary to curb the spread of this virus. With research labs closed, critical research is on hold and the researchers who rely on those labs are being furloughed.

Research programs cannot start or stop with the flip of a switch and suspending all activities except for critical and pandemic-related work is disruptive and costly. The scale of this crisis is unprecedented, and the longer research operations are suspended the more strain it will put on our nation's research ecosystem, local economies, and our global competitiveness. We estimate the \$26 billion will allow universities and other scientific institutions to sustain research personnel and base operating costs for core facilities and user-funded research services for 3 to 4 months. Supplemental funding will also mitigate the costs of winding down – and eventually ramping up – research operations on our campuses. **As you negotiate future relief packages, we urge you to provide \$26 billion in emergency supplemental funding for federal research agencies during this national emergency.**

#### Additional Financial Relief with Flexibility for States and Local Governments

The current pandemic has forced states and local government leaders to respond swiftly to address the growing health and safety needs of their constituents. Here in Colorado and across the nation, the public health crisis has also caused unexpected expenditures to address urgent needs such additional personal protective equipment, ventilators, testing sites, and other costs. While the \$150 billion set aside for states and local governments within the CARES Act allows them to recoup expenses directly attributed to the pandemic, it does not provide the necessary funding or flexibility to make up unexpected revenue shortages due to the state's stalled economic activity. The Governor's forecast predicts Colorado's state general fund revenue will be an estimated \$3.2 billion below Governor Polis' budget request in FY2020-2021 alone with cumulative losses totaling \$7 billion by FY 2022-23. Nationally, the revenue shortfall facing states is estimated to amount to \$650 billion over the next three years. Given Colorado's unique budgetary constraints, this abrupt loss in revenue will inevitably lead to large-scale budget cuts across the board for vital state and local programs, including higher education. While we applaud the delegation's recent efforts to provide additional financial relief with the critical flexibility necessary to help stave off revenue shortages and further economic collapse, **we urge Congress to provide at least \$500 billion in relief to states and local governments in order to help relieve looming budget cuts to higher education and other critical state and local programs.**

Again, we are grateful for your ongoing leadership and advocacy on behalf of Colorado and our institutions during this challenging time. We ask for your continued support for additional funding within upcoming federal relief packages for higher education, research, and for states and local governments with the necessary flexibility to meet the financial demands brought on by this global pandemic. As the state's higher education institutions, we are proud of our ability to deliver quality and affordable education and promote discovery in the communities we serve. We also take great pride in the significant role we play in Colorado's economic ecosystem and will continue to work with our federal, state, and local partners as we navigate through this crisis together. Your continued support is vital to this effort.

Sincerely,

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