

October , 2009

Dear Senator / Representative :

As you are aware, the budget for the need-based Monetary Award Program (MAP) was cut this year. We are at a period when the demand for the program has increased by almost 30 percent from last year. Because of this decision, the program lost nearly \$200 million dollars, resulting in approximately 130,000 eligible students who will not receive any award.

I am a student at Columbia College Chicago. Columbia is an institution which specializes in very specific careers within the visual, performing, media, and communication arts; and one that offers an education unavailable at any other college or university. At one time, a MAP award would cover full tuition and fees for a student attending Columbia. However, due to the cut in funding, the maximum award that a student can receive in MAP grants will only cover 25 percent of Columbia's tuition and fees. This is an enormous financial burden, not to mention additional supply and textbook expenses necessary for a college student.

For many of us students and our families, the cost of college poses a huge challenge in achieving our ambitions. The MAP cuts may force us to take on more expensive and less-regulated loans. Some of us may have to work more hours, but this will take away from time spent on studying and extracurricular activities that enhance our education. Some of us will cut the number of classes we are taking, or take a semester off, which will inevitably delay graduation. All these possibilities to make up for the loss in funding are detrimental enough, when, the truth is, that many will be forced to withdraw from higher education completely.

I urge you to please work with your colleagues to do whatever it takes to restore full funding for the Monetary Award Program.

A MAP grant is an advancement towards economic independence, personal achievement, and an ability to contribute to our communities and our economy. Slashing funding that offers these kinds of long-term benefits to students and to society is truly short-sighted.

Please restore full funding for MAP before November 1, 2009, and keep higher education within reach for students across the state of Illinois.

Thank you for your consideration and continuing support.

Sincerely,
