IHEP Statement on House FY20 Spending Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Wednesday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed spending legislation for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) that includes funding for programs within the U.S. Department of Education. IHEP Vice President of Policy Research Mamie Voight released the following statement:

"The FY20 spending bill passed this week includes modest, but essential steps forward in strengthening federal financial aid and helping today’s students afford the full cost of college. It includes laudable increases to critical programs with a proven track record of expanding access for our lowest-income students, including the Pell Grant, the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG), and Federal Work Study (FWS). The legislation would raise the maximum Pell Grant to $6,345 – a $150 increase. The bill would also allocate an additional $188 million to help fund SEOG and an additional $304 million for FWS. This increased investment will direct additional federal aid to the students who have unmet need and represents a recognition from policymakers that students need more financial support to gain access to and be successful in college.

“Additionally, we are thrilled to see that an additional $3 million was allocated for the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant program – a program that helps states develop and strengthen longitudinal data systems and, in turn, better inform their efforts to promote strong educational outcomes, build a 21st century workforce, and close racial and socioeconomic equity gaps.

“While IHEP applauds increased funding to necessary programs that promote equitable access and success for our students and calls on Senate appropriators to follow suit, we urge policymakers to further strengthen our federal financial aid system by substantially increasing the maximum Pell award and permanently indexing it to inflation. This action would help reverse the declining purchasing power of Pell awards and ensure that the program continues to be a driver of equitable postsecondary opportunities for generations to come.

“Each fiscal year, we have an enormous opportunity to meaningfully improve college affordability, particularly for our lowest-income students. We urge Congress to continue the spark of momentum from the House spending bill, increase investment in need-based aid, and take bold steps to help ensure that a college education is attainable for all students, regardless of their economic background.”