



LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS

To Reduce Crime & Incarceration

COVID-19 Relief Bill Allows People in Prison to Apply for Pell Grants for Higher Education

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The federal spending bill passed by the House and Senate includes a provision that would allow people in state and federal prisons to apply for Pell grants for college. This bill overturns a piece of the 1994 crime bill that prohibited people in prison from applying for Pell grants.

[Taryn Merkl](#), senior counsel for Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration had the following comment:

“This is terrific and long overdue. Allowing people who are incarcerated to participate in higher education programs is one of the most effective and proven ways to reduce the chances of returning to prison.

“As prosecutors, sheriffs, and other law enforcement leaders with decades of collective experience, we have been advocating for this change in the law. We believe we should do everything we can to make sure incarcerated individuals are set up for success when returning home.”

Resources

[Letter of support](#) for expanding access to Pell grants for all eligible incarcerated people, consistent with the Restoring Education And Learning Act of 2019 (REAL Act) (December 2020)

[Briefing Memo](#) on Pell grant restoration (October 2019)

[Open letter](#) to Congress in support of restoring Pell grant funding to people who are incarcerated (August 2019)

[Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration](#) is a project of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.

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