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April 24, 2014

**The Honorable Don Gaetz**  
President  
Florida Senate  
212 Senate Office Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

**The Honorable Will Weatherford**  
Speaker  
Florida House of Representatives  
420 The Capitol  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

RE: Bright Futures and Need-Based Assistance

Dear President Gaetz and Speaker Weatherford:

As you move into the final stages of budget conference, the Florida Council of 100 renews its request that all savings from the merit-based Bright Futures program be reinvested in need-based financial assistance programs, specifically the Florida Student Assistance Grant.

So far this session, the Legislature has proposed reducing Bright Futures by \$43.2 million. This reduction has been enabled by falling program enrollment, fueled by increasing eligibility requirements. As a result, many of those students who can no longer participate in Bright Futures will be left without a need-based financial safety net.

The Council of 100 applauds your making the tough decision to raise Bright Futures standards and for proposing to transfer a significant portion of the Fiscal Year 2014-15 savings to need-based assistance in the form of the Florida Student Access Grant. However, Florida is ranked 35th in the nation for percentage of aid based on need, and much more need-based assistance is required.

We therefore respectfully request that you invest at least \$43.2 million in additional need-based aid for Fiscal Year 2014-15 to compensate for the expected 2014-15 enrollment decline in Bright



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Futures. Doing so will help create a balance of need and merit-based aid and will go far to advance the worthy goal of assuring access to postsecondary education for all.

Sincerely,

Steve Halverson  
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Rick Scott, Governor, State of Florida  
The Honorable Joe Negron, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Seth McKeel, Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Bill Galvano, Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education  
The Honorable Erik Fresen, Chair, House Education Appropriations Subcommittee  
The Honorable John Legg, Chair, Senate Education Committee  
The Honorable Marlene O'Toole, Chair, House Education Committee  
Mori Hosseini, Chair, Florida Board of Governors  
Marshall Criser, III, Chancellor, State University System of Florida  
Gary Chartrand, Chair, State Board of Education  
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