



June 23, 2022

Governor Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

On behalf of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I thank you for your deep and long-standing commitment to the University of Pittsburgh and urge you to continue to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the institution amid unprecedented efforts to reduce or eliminate state support for the university.

APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities. With a membership of 246 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations, including the University of Pittsburgh, The Pennsylvania State University, and Temple University, APLU's agenda is built on the three pillars of increasing degree completion and academic success, advancing scientific research, and expanding engagement. Annually, its U.S. member campuses enroll 4.2 million undergraduates and 1.2 million graduate students, award 1.2 million degrees, employ 1.1 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$48.7 billion in university-based research.

As I know you appreciate, public research universities play a foundational role in educating the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, fostering innovation and job creation, and driving economic development. Public research universities play a central role in addressing society's most vexing challenges.

APLU and the broader public university community are deeply concerned about efforts in the Pennsylvania legislature to eliminate the Commonwealth's financial support for Pitt and those it serves. This change could force one of the nation's leading public research powerhouses to effectively become a private institution. Such a move would cause great harm to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and distance an institution from the communities and state it serves.

Pitt's partnership with the state connects disparate disciplines to address some of society's most intractable challenges. Pitt's experts, programs, and partnerships have played an indispensable role in containing the pandemic, addressing public safety concerns, engineering better energy solutions, improving the field of early education, combating opioid use and abuse—and much, much more.

At nearly every turn, Pitt has done its part. It is an extremely highly regarded public university. It educates 28,000 undergraduates each year—the majority of whom call Pennsylvania home. It has overhauled its access and affordability efforts, recently launching the largest restructuring of financial aid in its 235-year history. The institution's impact on your state's economic growth, talent development, opportunity creation and future success is hard to overstate.

Withdrawing state funding would send an alarming signal to professors, researchers, students, and subject matter experts across your state, throughout the nation, and globally. It would be a catastrophic move that would weaken the commonwealth's ability to attract and attain new talent and set Pennsylvania apart from every other state across the nation—and for all the wrong reasons.

We need advocates like you—leaders who have experienced research-based training in a rigorous yet practical setting—to redouble your commendable efforts in support of public higher education and stand up for Pitt and Pennsylvania. We need voices like yours to underscore how vitally important it is for the commonwealth to double down on—not back away from—investing in its own residents and their success.

Research shapes a student’s worldview and inspires them to take on challenges that cross all of society. We ask you to take every step you can to help protect Pitt’s state funding; preserve its partnership with the commonwealth; and enable Pitt to continue serving as a source of academic excellence, research pride and economic opportunity in Pennsylvania for decades to come.

Additionally, while APLU understands Pitt is under unique challenges, we are also aware of state legislation that would incrementally privatize all of Pennsylvania’s public research universities. Such a move, unprecedented in our nation’s history, would divorce a state’s valuable economic resources from solving its problems and represent an incredible self-inflicted wound. APLU notes that Pennsylvania is already severely behind other states in funding public higher education. According to data from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, in 2021, public institutions in Pennsylvania had \$6,171 in education appropriations per FTE, approximately 66% of the U.S. average. General operating appropriations in Pennsylvania have decreased 47.0% per FTE from \$9,095 in 2001 to \$4,822 in 2021.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue and your steadfast advocacy on behalf of our institutions of higher education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter McPherson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Peter McPherson
President, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

cc: University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Patrick Gallagher