

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NEIL L. BRADLEY
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT &
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October 29, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education
and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education
and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is encouraged to see your Committee take steps towards a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (“HEA”) by considering H.R. 4674, the “College Affordability Act.” While the legislation includes a number of provisions that the Chamber has long championed, we are disappointed that the process is not bipartisan and have concerns about how the legislation proposes to accomplish some of those priorities.

Most notably, the Chamber strongly supports the College Transparency Act (“CTA”), and appreciates its inclusion within the College Affordability Act (“CAA”). CTA is the Chamber’s top HEA reauthorization priority and is included in our legislative scorecard’s “Legislative Leadership” list as a Chamber-endorsed bill. CTA not only would repeal the ban on a student-level data network, but also would help students enter the workforce with the skills that employers need by providing students with accurate earnings and employment information on both the institution and program level.

Of particular concern, however, is the treatment of propriety institutions of higher education within the CAA. The Chamber believes that institutions representing all sectors should be treated fairly, and therefore, opposes provisions that single out for-profit institutions simply because of their tax status. The Chamber opposes provisions such as those that would change the “90-10” rule or that would codify Obama-era gainful employment and borrower defense regulations.

The Chamber is also concerned that while a number of provisions meant to expand access and eligibility to higher education are included within CAA, the legislation would needlessly complicate who can participate in the programs and which schools they can attend. For example, the Chamber strongly supports short-term Pell, which would allow individuals attending programs that are at least 150 clock hours to access Pell Grants. In addition, the Chamber supports the REAL Act, which is a straight-forward approach to restoring Pell Grant access to incarcerated individuals, and has included it on the Chamber’s Legislative Leadership list. CAA,

however, creates different rules and requirements for short-term Pell and Second-Chance Pell Grant programs than is the case for traditional Pell-eligible students. These added restrictions will ultimately limit opportunity and choice for students trying to gain the education and skills they need to successfully enter the workforce or grow in their careers.

At a time when there are more job openings than there are individuals looking for employment, employers struggle to find workers with the right education and experience. Therefore, passing a comprehensive higher education bill that expands eligibility and access, promotes multiple pathways to opportunity, assures quality and enhances accountability, modernizes education data, and emphasizes completion and workforce participation for all institutions of higher education is essential. The Chamber looks forward to working with the Committee on these and other issues, and as H.R. 4674 advances in the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neil L. Bradley", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neil L. Bradley

cc: Members of the Committee on Education and Labor