



January 30, 2024

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education
the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the and
and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Scott:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce commends you for your work on H.R. 6951, the “College Cost Reduction Act (CCRA).” As we continue our review of this legislation, we share below our initial feedback on provisions we support as well as those for which we recommend improvements as CCRA advances.

We strongly support the inclusion of important, bipartisan provisions such as the “Pell Plus Act,” “Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act,” and the “Understanding the True Cost of College Act,” which would be positive steps toward addressing the evolving needs of students and educational institutions. We also support the provision that would give financial aid administrators flexibility to lower loan limits for certain categories of borrowers, thereby empowering institutions to work more closely with students and enabling a collaborative effort to determine appropriate borrowing levels and ultimately reduce instances of overborrowing.

We also appreciate the steps your Committee has taken to address critical issues within higher education data transparency and look forward to working with you to strengthen these provisions. America’s students and their families need accurate information on the returns they can expect for their substantial investments of time and resources in higher education. The current restrictions on connecting existing post-secondary education data leads to incomplete, inaccurate, and often misleading data. The CCRA’s requirement to create a student-level data network (SLDN) that includes aggregated, program-level statistics on college costs, financial aid, and student outcomes, along with the option for students to create customizable comparisons of degree and certificate programs, is commendable. However, it is crucial to include all students in the SLDN, as excluding certain populations undermines the accuracy, usefulness, and, ultimately, intended goals of the provision. We encourage further consideration to refine the SLDN and its integration into existing data reporting systems to enhance its effectiveness in providing comprehensive and unbiased information for all stakeholders involved in the higher education landscape.

We appreciate the inclusion of the “Federal Assistance to Initiate Repayment (FAIR) Act” to streamline federal loan repayment plans into two options – a standard 10-year mortgage-style plan and one income-driven plan. While we support this effort to simplify the system, we recommend considering the creation of a single income-based loan repayment option to further enhance clarity and accessibility for borrowers.

Accreditation reform is another vital component of the legislative package, and we commend the Committee’s dedication to this critical issue. The legislation makes several constructive improvements, specifically those requiring independence of accreditors, mandating business representation on accreditation boards, emphasizing transparency of accreditor actions, and implementing standards for student outcomes in the accreditation process. However, we encourage the Committee to bolster transparency within the accreditation system, linking accreditation more explicitly to student achievement and outcomes.

Furthermore, while the proposed "Alternative Quality Assurance Experimental Site Initiative" would help diversify education providers, we suggest an expanded exploration of alternative quality assurance measures, including employer-led initiatives, to open Title IV eligibility to a more diverse array of providers. This approach aligns with our commitment to fostering a responsive and flexible accreditation system that meets the dynamic needs of the workforce.

In conclusion, we commend the House Committee on Education and the Workforce for its commitment to advancing post-secondary education through this legislative package. The Chamber is encouraged by the positive steps taken and looks forward to working with you as this bill advances.

Sincerely,

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

Neil L. Bradley
Executive Vice President,
Chief Policy Officer,
and Head of Strategic Advocacy
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

cc: Committee on Education and the and the Workforce