

Higher Education Act Reauthorization: Make College More Affordable & Accessible



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First passed in 1965 to ensure that every individual has access to higher education, regardless of income or zip code, the Higher Education Act (HEA) governs student-aid programs, federal aid to colleges, oversight of teacher preparation programs, and more. Congress has begun debating and could reauthorize the law this year.

MAKE COLLEGE MORE AFFORDABLE

- ▶ The total student debt burden is nearly \$1.5 trillion and exceeds total credit card debt, according to the [Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#).
- ▶ The average 2016 graduate has \$37,172 in student loan debt, the [Wall Street Journal](#) reported.
- ▶ Crushing debt hinders graduates' ability to buy homes and cars, start businesses and families, invest, and contribute to economic growth in other ways.

ENHANCE ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- ▶ Provide incentives for states to reinvest in higher education, not shift costs to students and families
- ▶ Help students begin a pathway to a postsecondary degree by eliminating community college tuition
- ▶ Allow federal student loans to be refinanced when interest rates decline
- ▶ Expand loan forgiveness programs to cover adjunct or "contingent" faculty and encourage careers in teaching, education, and other forms of public service
- ▶ Increase opportunities for students to earn college credits while still in high school
- ▶ Streamline repayment plans to create a single income-based option with affordable monthly payments
- ▶ Restore federally subsidized loans for graduate students
- ▶ Permit private student loans to be discharged in bankruptcy
- ▶ Increase support for institutional aid programs for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Asian-Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions

IMPROVE TEACHER PREPARATION

- ▶ Help ensure all teachers are profession-ready from the first day they enter the classroom by encouraging comprehensive residencies that go beyond traditional student teaching

IMPROVE FACULTY WORKING CONDITIONS

- ▶ The majority of U.S. college and university students are taught by adjunct faculty — non-tenure-track professors.
- ▶ Poor working conditions for adjuncts limit opportunities for meaningful contact with students.
- ▶ We need to provide incentives for institutions to invest in a predominantly full-time, tenure-track faculty and improve working conditions for adjuncts.