

Higher Education Act Reauthorization: Make College More Affordable & Accessible

The Higher Education Act (HEA), first passed in 1965, governs student-aid programs, federal aid to colleges, oversight of teacher preparation programs, and more. Congress has begun debating the law and could reauthorize it 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](#). This level of debt hinders graduates' ability to buy homes, start businesses and families, invest, and contribute to economic growth.
- ▶ Protect and enhance Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Teacher Loan Forgiveness. Both programs encourage college graduates to pursue careers in education, and should be expanded to include adjunct or "contingent" faculty in higher education.

ENHANCE ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- ▶ States should have incentives to reinvest in higher education to stem cost-shifting to students and families.
- ▶ The purchasing power of Pell Grants is at its lowest in more than 40 years, covering only 29 percent of the cost of attending a four-year institution ([Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#)). More funding should be provided to this program, the cornerstone of federal assistance.
- ▶ Community college tuition should be eliminated to provide students a pathway to a postsecondary degree.
- ▶ Borrowers should be able to refinance loans when interest rates decline.
- ▶ Students should have more opportunities to earn college credits while still in high school.
- ▶ Repayment plans should be streamlined to create a single income-based option with affordable payments.
- ▶ Federally subsidized loans should be restored for graduate students.
- ▶ Institutional aid programs should be increased for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Asian-Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions.

IMPROVE TEACHER PREPARATION

- ▶ Provide incentives to increase diversity in the educator workforce so it reflects today's student population.
- ▶ 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 whose poor working conditions 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.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- ▶ Safeguards must be in place to protect students from fraud, abuse, and the predatory practices of for-profit colleges and universities.
- ▶ The 90/10 rule must be restored to 85/15, and accreditation by reputable accreditors must continue for these institutions to participate in financial aid programs.