

June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
SD-430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (AECT) are pleased to provide brief comments concerning the Higher Education Affordability Act. AACC and AECT represent the CEOs and trustees, respectively, of the nation's more than 1,100 community colleges. As you know, community colleges enroll more than 8 million credit students each fall and serve as essential engines of individual opportunity and economic growth. No legislation is more important to community colleges and their students than the Higher Education Act (HEA).

We commend your introduction of this HEA reauthorization legislation. It clearly represents months of hard work and thoughtful deliberation, with broad input from our own community. Without taking a formal position on the legislation at this time, we wish to highlight some of its most important and positive features from the community college perspective based on our review of portions of the draft legislation.

Most importantly, the legislation enhances the Pell Grant program, which now serves more than 3.2 million community college students annually. Our campuses would look entirely different without the support of the Pell Grant. We commend the reinstatement of the year-round Pell Grant. We believe all students who wish to attend school throughout the year should be able to do so. In addition, the creation of federal aid eligibility for "Ability-to-Benefit" students enrolled in career pathways programs will provide opportunity for thousands of students who otherwise could not enroll in college, and we hope eligibility ultimately will be expanded.

In the area of student loans, we strongly support the consolidation of income-driven repayment options, recognizing that this option is best suited for students who are finding it difficult to afford their monthly loan payments. We also support pro-rating loan caps based on enrollment status or intensity while continuing to support institutional discretion in limiting loan maximums for students in defined circumstances, such as those in certain programs or those in need of substantial amounts of developmental education.

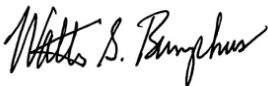
Community colleges and policy makers will also benefit from the bill's Student Default Risk Index, which reflects our institutions' low tuition policies that allow most students to avoid borrowing, and could serve as a replacement for less accurate measures based on borrowers alone. Finally, the legislation aims to improve the performance of student loan servicers. The complexity and confusion created for students by servicers, and at times multiple servicers, is

partially responsible for many of the challenges facing students in repayment and for increasing cohort default rates.

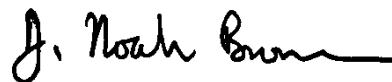
The proposed legislation also envisions new federal investments in areas central to the community college mission that reach beyond our campuses. These include a new program to help community colleges respond to specific industry needs through education and training programs. Despite their longer-term economic benefits, these programs are often cost-prohibitive for our colleges to offer, and so represent a wise federal investment. In addition, the legislation creates a new pathway to support dual enrollment programs at our nation's high schools, which have proven to be of extraordinary benefit to secondary students across the country by exposing students to higher education and providing low-cost degree options. Finally, the bill creates a new grant program to support "reverse transfer" that would enable more students who have transferred from community colleges with qualifying academic records to earn associate degrees.

Again, AACC and ACCT commend you for introducing this key legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, and look forward to working with you further on it in the coming weeks and months.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO



June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

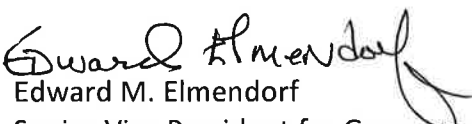
Dear Mr. Chairman,

I write on behalf of the membership of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities to thank you for your decades-long leadership on higher education policy, and to offer our support for your blueprint for reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

The discussion draft of the Higher Education Affordability Act addresses a broad range of challenges facing American higher education, and proposes thoughtful policy solutions based on the Committee's extensive review of the facts and its bipartisan series of hearings on the issues. The proposed legislation includes a number of critically important provisions that, once enacted, would go a long way toward making a college education more accessible and more affordable for students and families. Chief among these is the proposed Federal-State Matching Grant program, which would provide a voluntary, but powerful, incentive for states to do their fair share in supporting public higher education. In addition, the bill would carefully expand access by restoring year-round Pell grants and ability-to-benefit eligibility for federal aid. We are also pleased to see new provisions to promote and evaluate promising innovations in higher education, including new authorizations for competency-based programs and grants to promote affordability. The proposed legislation also adds much-needed program integrity provisions, which would significantly improve institutional accountability.

Beyond the impressive substance of your legislation, we are also grateful for the process the Committee has adopted as it moves forward. This legislation is based on extensive fact-finding and investigative efforts, as well as on the lengthy record of bipartisan hearings held during the past year. We appreciate the Committee's decision to collect and review comments on the discussion draft before it proceeds with a final draft, and stand ready to work with you and all members of the Committee in that effort.

Sincerely,


Edward M. Elmendorf
Senior Vice President for Government Relations
And Policy Analysis

Bob Wise
Governor of West Virginia, 2001–2005



June 23, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

The Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) is pleased to endorse your proposals to strengthen Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and to include a strong program in support of dual enrollment and early college high schools within the law.

The American education system is undergoing an historic transformation as states implement new college- and career-ready standards and assessments. Full implementation of these standards is dependent upon the quality and effectiveness of the teachers and leaders in the nation's schools. Your proposed improvements strengthen teacher preparation through Title II of HEA and will help ensure that all students receive the quality instruction they need and deserve. In particular, the Alliance appreciates that your bill will

- align teacher preparation programs with state-determined college- and career-ready standards;
- support teachers in developing assessments and using data for the purpose of strengthening and personalizing instruction;
- prepare teachers to support the acquisition of critical competencies, including critical thinking, complex problem solving, and effective communication;
- provide teacher candidates with clinical experience to support the development of skills they will need to be effective in the classroom; and
- strengthen teachers' ability to provide effective literacy instruction.

In addition, your HEA reauthorization proposal recognizes the need to strengthen America's high schools and the pipeline between high school and postsecondary education. The Alliance applauds your proposal to fund dual enrollment and early college high schools. In particular, the Alliance is pleased that your bill will

- target this investment toward those students who are most in need;
- support partnerships between local educational agencies and institutions of higher education to reduce postsecondary remediation; and
- provide students with a system of support to ensure their success in high school and their effective transition to postsecondary education.

Thank you for your leadership. The Alliance looks forward to continuing its work with you to further refine and strengthen these and other areas of HEA as the reauthorization process continues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bob Wise'.

Bob Wise
President



Americans for Financial Reform
1629 K St NW, 10th Floor, Washington, DC, 20006
202.466.1885

June 24, 2014

The Honorable Thomas Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin,

Americans for Financial Reform, a coalition of more than 200 national, state, and local organizations that have come together to advocate for reform of the financial industry, is writing to express support of your efforts to improve outcomes for student loan borrowers by including important new protections in the discussion draft “Higher Education Affordability Act.” Our coalition is focused on lending and financial market issues and does not, as a group, take positions on many education related issues; however we do work together on lending and financial services matters that affect students, former students, and their families. We appreciate that your legislation includes important steps forward in grappling with these issues.

Stronger consumer protections in the student loan market are badly needed. Students are now graduating with unprecedented amounts of debt owed, and default rates are on the rise. Currently, around 40 million Americans are estimated to owe approximately \$1.2 trillion in student loan debt; this is equivalent to around \$30,000 in outstanding debt per borrower. Unfortunately, this large and growing market lacks basic consumer protections for student loan borrowers, as has been well documented by the CFPB, FDIC, Department of Justice, and others.

The Higher Education Affordability Act contains many provisions that would help student loan borrowers, their families, and therefore the broader economy. It would increase accountability for servicers and student debt collectors, and protect borrowers from negative credit report impacts. It would provide protections for borrowers that currently exist in the mortgage market but are absent in the student loan market, in areas including—but not limited to—loan origination, dispute resolution, and servicing transfer problems. Furthermore, we are pleased to see that this bill would provide ways for more borrowers to get out of default situations through rehabilitation. Currently, borrowers who are trying to get out of default and have already rehabilitated their loans cannot rehabilitate them again. This legislation would increase clarity for students about their education funding options and what financial aid and loans they are being offered. Reforms in this legislation that would help private education loan borrowers include mandatory certification of private loans, and mandatory consumer protections as conditions of certification. The discussion draft Higher Education Affordability Act would also help private loan borrowers in the most difficult situations by restoring fair treatment of private loans in bankruptcy.

The Higher Education Affordability Act would additionally help borrowers in the most difficult situations by making private loans dischargeable in bankruptcy. It would help protect students from fee gouging while they are in school with a useful approach that gets at perverse incentives built into contracts between schools and financial services providers; an approach we think can and should be extended to a broader range of products. It would also make great strides toward banning mandatory arbitration agreements, to the benefit of borrowers. Finally, another key element are its provisions addressing harmful practices in the for-profit schools industry, an industry that unfortunately often takes advantage of, rather than serves, non-traditional students seeking better job opportunities.

Americans for Financial Reform and our members look forward to the opportunity to work with you and other members of the Senate HELP Committee to fight for protections and a safety net for student loan borrowers and their families, and to build on the advances proposed in this legislation. We will appreciate the opportunity to continue to refine a number of provisions that are on the table, including, for example, enhancing the Department of Education's ability to investigate fraud in the for-profit schools industry, establishing a centralized complaint system, and restoring a safety net for student loan borrowers. We also look forward to continuing to work on the details of the mandatory arbitration provisions included in the bill. We commend you for putting needed steps to change the student loan market on the table.

Sincerely,

Americans for Financial Reform

Following are the partners of Americans for Financial Reform.

All the organizations support the overall principles of AFR and are working for an accountable, fair and secure financial system. Not all of these organizations work on all of the issues covered by the coalition or have signed on to every statement.

- AARP
- A New Way Forward
- AFL-CIO
- AFSCME
- Alliance For Justice
- American Income Life Insurance
- American Sustainable Business Council
- Americans for Democratic Action, Inc
- Americans United for Change
- Campaign for America's Future
- Campaign Money
- Center for Digital Democracy
- Center for Economic and Policy Research
- Center for Economic Progress
- Center for Media and Democracy
- Center for Responsible Lending
- Center for Justice and Democracy
- Center of Concern
- Center for Effective Government
- Change to Win
- Clean Yield Asset Management
- Coastal Enterprises Inc.
- Color of Change
- Common Cause
- Communications Workers of America
- Community Development Transportation Lending Services
- Consumer Action
- Consumer Association Council
- Consumers for Auto Safety and Reliability
- Consumer Federation of America
- Consumer Watchdog
- Consumers Union
- Corporation for Enterprise Development
- CREDO Mobile
- CTW Investment Group
- Demos
- Economic Policy Institute
- Essential Action
- Green America
- Greenlining Institute
- Good Business International

- HNMA Funding Company
- Home Actions
- Housing Counseling Services
- Home Defender's League
- Information Press
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
- Institute for Global Communications
- Institute for Policy Studies: Global Economy Project
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- Institute of Women's Policy Research
- Krull & Company
- Laborers' International Union of North America
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
- Main Street Alliance
- Move On
- NAACP
- NASCAT
- National Association of Consumer Advocates
- National Association of Neighborhoods
- National Community Reinvestment Coalition
- National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)
- National Consumers League
- National Council of La Raza
- National Council of Women's Organizations
- National Fair Housing Alliance
- National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions
- National Housing Resource Center
- National Housing Trust
- National Housing Trust Community Development Fund
- National NeighborWorks Association
- National Nurses United
- National People's Action
- National Urban League
- Next Step
- OpenTheGovernment.org
- Opportunity Finance Network
- Partners for the Common Good
- PICO National Network
- Progress Now Action
- Progressive States Network
- Poverty and Race Research Action Council
- Public Citizen
- Sargent Shriver Center on Poverty Law
- SEIU
- State Voices
- Taxpayer's for Common Sense
- The Association for Housing and Neighborhood Development
- The Fuel Savers Club

- The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- The Seminal
- TICAS
- U.S. Public Interest Research Group
- UNITE HERE
- United Food and Commercial Workers
- United States Student Association
- USAction
- Veris Wealth Partners
- Western States Center
- We the People Now
- Woodstock Institute
- World Privacy Forum
- UNET
- Union Plus
- Unitarian Universalist for a Just Economic Community

List of State and Local Partners

- Alaska PIRG
- Arizona PIRG
- Arizona Advocacy Network
- Arizonans For Responsible Lending
- Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development NY
- Audubon Partnership for Economic Development LDC, New York NY
- BAC Funding Consortium Inc., Miami FL
- Beech Capital Venture Corporation, Philadelphia PA
- California PIRG
- California Reinvestment Coalition
- Century Housing Corporation, Culver City CA
- CHANGER NY
- Chautauqua Home Rehabilitation and Improvement Corporation (NY)
- Chicago Community Loan Fund, Chicago IL
- Chicago Community Ventures, Chicago IL
- Chicago Consumer Coalition
- Citizen Potawatomi CDC, Shawnee OK
- Colorado PIRG
- Coalition on Homeless Housing in Ohio
- Community Capital Fund, Bridgeport CT
- Community Capital of Maryland, Baltimore MD
- Community Development Financial Institution of the Tohono O'odham Nation, Sells AZ
- Community Redevelopment Loan and Investment Fund, Atlanta GA
- Community Reinvestment Association of North Carolina
- Community Resource Group, Fayetteville A
- Connecticut PIRG
- Consumer Assistance Council
- Cooper Square Committee (NYC)
- Cooperative Fund of New England, Wilmington NC

- Corporacion de Desarrollo Economico de Ceiba, Ceiba PR
- Delta Foundation, Inc., Greenville MS
- Economic Opportunity Fund (EOF), Philadelphia PA
- Empire Justice Center NY
- Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP), Cleveland OH
- Enterprises, Inc., Berea KY
- Fair Housing Contact Service OH
- Federation of Appalachian Housing
- Fitness and Praise Youth Development, Inc., Baton Rouge LA
- Florida Consumer Action Network
- Florida PIRG
- Funding Partners for Housing Solutions, Ft. Collins CO
- Georgia PIRG
- Grow Iowa Foundation, Greenfield IA
- Homewise, Inc., Santa Fe NM
- Idaho Nevada CDFI, Pocatello ID
- Idaho Chapter, National Association of Social Workers
- Illinois PIRG
- Impact Capital, Seattle WA
- Indiana PIRG
- Iowa PIRG
- Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
- JobStart Chautauqua, Inc., Mayville NY
- La Casa Federal Credit Union, Newark NJ
- Low Income Investment Fund, San Francisco CA
- Long Island Housing Services NY
- MaineStream Finance, Bangor ME
- Maryland PIRG
- Massachusetts Consumers' Coalition
- MASSPIRG
- Massachusetts Fair Housing Center
- Michigan PIRG
- Midland Community Development Corporation, Midland TX
- Midwest Minnesota Community Development Corporation, Detroit Lakes MN
- Mile High Community Loan Fund, Denver CO
- Missouri PIRG
- Mortgage Recovery Service Center of L.A.
- Montana Community Development Corporation, Missoula MT
- Montana PIRG
- New Economy Project
- New Hampshire PIRG
- New Jersey Community Capital, Trenton NJ
- New Jersey Citizen Action
- New Jersey PIRG
- New Mexico PIRG
- New York PIRG
- New York City Aids Housing Network
- New Yorkers for Responsible Lending

- NOAH Community Development Fund, Inc., Boston MA
- Nonprofit Finance Fund, New York NY
- Nonprofits Assistance Fund, Minneapolis M
- North Carolina PIRG
- Northside Community Development Fund, Pittsburgh PA
- Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing, Columbus OH
- Ohio PIRG
- OligarchyUSA
- Oregon State PIRG
- Our Oregon
- PennPIRG
- Piedmont Housing Alliance, Charlottesville VA
- Michigan PIRG
- Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, CO
- Rhode Island PIRG
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation, West Sacramento CA
- Rural Organizing Project OR
- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority
- Seattle Economic Development Fund
- Community Capital Development
- TexPIRG
- The Fair Housing Council of Central New York
- The Loan Fund, Albuquerque NM
- Third Reconstruction Institute NC
- Vermont PIRG
- Village Capital Corporation, Cleveland OH
- Virginia Citizens Consumer Council
- Virginia Poverty Law Center
- War on Poverty - Florida
- WashPIRG
- Westchester Residential Opportunities Inc.
- Wigamig Owners Loan Fund, Inc., Lac du Flambeau WI
- WISPIRG

Small Businesses

- Blu
- Bowden-Gill Environmental
- Community MedPAC
- Diversified Environmental Planning
- Hayden & Craig, PLLC
- Mid City Animal Hospital, Pheonix AZ
- UNET



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

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June 24, 2014

Chairman Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

On behalf of the 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, including more than 200,000 higher education professionals, I commend you for introducing the Higher Education Affordability Act. It represents a strong first step in the Higher Education Act reauthorization process and rightly focuses federal intervention on issues of public investment, access and affordability. In addition, the AFT would like to weigh in on the all-important subject of teacher preparation. We should take a page out of the book of the countries that do it better than we do, by making preparation of K-12 teachers more like preparation of doctors: more professional, more clinical, more rigorous and better supported. We also remain concerned about the use of student test scores in evaluating teacher preparation programs, as we are the only country that would use these scores for that purpose.

Public Investment

We are witnessing a race to the bottom in our higher education system. We trumpet higher education as essential, but public investment in higher education is at its lowest point in more than a quarter-century, causing deep cuts to vital academic programs and student support services, and altering the academic workforce in ways that have a direct effect on student success. We were pleased to see that the cornerstone of this HEA reauthorization proposal is a state-federal partnership. This will make states accountable for the years of disinvesting in higher education, and will begin to reverse that trend by focusing investments to control the cost of higher education and improve the quality of education.

This funding will also create a mechanism to reinvest in instruction and student support services, which are critical to student success and persistence. Colleges and universities have not been held accountable for their overreliance on underpaid and underresourced contingent faculty to teach the majority of college courses. This workforce includes part-time/adjunct faculty; full-time, nontenure-track faculty; and graduate employees. Together, these employees now comprise 73 percent of the nearly 1.6 million-employee instructional workforce in higher education. This is not an environment that contributes to meaningful student success. Research tells us that students are more likely to succeed when they have access to a well-supported, full-time faculty as well as key student services such as career counseling, academic services and

Bob Wise
Governor of West Virginia, 2001–2005



June 23, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
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Dear Chairman Harkin:

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The American education system is undergoing an historic transformation as states implement new college- and career-ready standards and assessments. Full implementation of these standards is dependent upon the quality and effectiveness of the teachers and leaders in the nation's schools. Your proposed improvements strengthen teacher preparation through Title II of HEA and will help ensure that all students receive the quality instruction they need and deserve. In particular, the Alliance appreciates that your bill will

- align teacher preparation programs with state-determined college- and career-ready standards;
- support teachers in developing assessments and using data for the purpose of strengthening and personalizing instruction;
- prepare teachers to support the acquisition of critical competencies, including critical thinking, complex problem solving, and effective communication;
- provide teacher candidates with clinical experience to support the development of skills they will need to be effective in the classroom; and
- strengthen teachers' ability to provide effective literacy instruction.

In addition, your HEA reauthorization proposal recognizes the need to strengthen America's high schools and the pipeline between high school and postsecondary education. The Alliance applauds your proposal to fund dual enrollment and early college high schools. In particular, the Alliance is pleased that your bill will

- target this investment toward those students who are most in need;
- support partnerships between local educational agencies and institutions of higher education to reduce postsecondary remediation; and
- provide students with a system of support to ensure their success in high school and their effective transition to postsecondary education.

Thank you for your leadership. The Alliance looks forward to continuing its work with you to further refine and strengthen these and other areas of HEA as the reauthorization process continues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bob Wise'.

Bob Wise
President

library staff. Conversely, institutions that rely too heavily on a faculty that is part-time, underpaid and undersupported have students who are less likely to persist and attain a degree or transfer.

Access

As institutions pull resources from instruction, they have also been raising tuition. We can no longer be a nation that tells our young people that college is essential to enter the middle class, while slashing the support students need and saddling them with enormous debt. While looking to improve the system for future students, HEA reauthorization must also deal with the current student debt crisis. The AFT strongly supports provisions in the proposal that will simplify the repayment options available to students, place delinquent borrowers automatically in a repayment plan based on income, and restore some bankruptcy provisions for borrowers. The draft bill also extends to students commonsense protections already available to mortgage borrowers.

We encourage you to include the current student loan refinancing language from Sen. Elizabeth Warren's (D-Mass.) bill, the Bank on Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act, to allow all borrowers to refinance both public and private student loans. Refinancing is already an option for consumers with car and home loans, and should be an option for all student loan borrowers as well. Lowering interest on existing student loans would save borrowers \$14 billion and add \$21 billion to our recovering economy.

Fraud and Abuse

We applaud language in the proposed bill that closes loopholes and strengthens current law to prevent fraud and abuse in higher education. We have long advocated for the changes included in this proposal: including educational financial assistance from all federal agencies, such as Department of Defense tuition assistance and GI Bill benefits, for the purposes of calculating the "90/10" rule; strengthening the "90/10" rule by returning to an "85/15" ratio, requiring institutions that receive federal financial aid to certify that at least 15 percent of their revenues are coming from somewhere other than federal sources; and barring schools from using federal financial aid money for marketing to and recruiting students.

Accreditation

The proposal also reviews the accountability of accreditation. The AFT has been calling for accreditors—whether the national regulatory boards, the six regional accreditation organizations, or the many specialized discipline-specific accreditation groups—to stay true to their original mission of peer-driven quality assurance but to provide more transparency to the federal government and the public. The proposal rightly requires public disclosure of the recommendations of visiting site teams, including any sanctions, along with final decisions of the accreditation commission. The AFT looks forward to continuing to work with you and your staff on recommitting to the original vision of

higher education accreditation as a quality checkpoint and finding ways to make the process fair, accurate and transparent.

Teacher Preparation

Strengthening the relationship between teacher preparation programs and institutions of higher education will go a long way to ensuring that teachers have the rigorous clinical experiences that research has shown are essential. In particular, the AFT strongly backs the inclusion of support for residency programs in this draft. These programs—which by definition include a funded year of clinical training under a mentor teacher, with attention to a wide range of skills and knowledge that candidates must acquire before they become teachers of record in their own classrooms—represent an important step toward professionalizing and really preparing our teaching force. We feel that this step is all the more important at a time when many preparation programs promote on-the-job training for teachers, without sufficient pre-service training and experience.

We are disappointed that the bill would give priority to states with evaluation systems that require standardized testing in assessing student growth, and that the reporting and rating requirements include graduates whose students demonstrate standardized test-based student growth. The AFT does not support the use of K-12 student test scores as a tool for the evaluation of teacher preparation programs. Testing in English, language arts and math should not be the be-all and end-all for evaluating the teaching profession or the preparation of teachers. Student achievement tests are not designed for preparation program assessment, and there is no proven link between features of teacher preparation programs and differences in student test scores. Finally, use of student test scores may have an unfair impact on preparation programs whose graduates serve high-needs students.

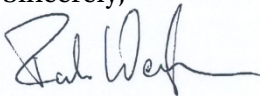
The AFT urges the committee not to rely on the current ESEA-based testing and accountability systems to evaluate programs, especially since many of these systems have shown themselves to be flawed and will be reformed and changed in the coming years. There are many other, and better, ways to assess student learning—and we applaud the committee for allowing measures such as performance-based assessments, which are in use very successfully at programs like the Performance Standards Consortium and Pathways in Technology Early College High School in New York City. However, the requirement to use ESEA-required language arts and math assessments, when they are available, to judge teacher preparation programs is problematic.

Finally, if the intent of the proposed bill is to gather data on the teaching profession as a way to improve preparation, the data must fairly assess ALL preparation programs. The AFT is concerned that the reporting requirements, particularly percentages of recent program graduates employed, provide unfair advantages to programs that train their participants while those participants are already teachers of record. These programs would be allowed to count all of their participants as employed, while programs that

prepare and then graduate students before those students become teachers of record can only count their graduates who secure jobs as employed. The employment reporting requirement thus measures program participation on one hand and post-program employment on the other, and these are not comparable measures. A consequence of this uneven advantage for programs that train teachers on the job may be to provide disincentives for programs to provide robust pre-service training, and the very residency-model programs supported in the bill may thus be undermined.

I want to thank you and your staff again for moving forward on the higher education reauthorization and drafting a bill that correctly addresses the access and affordability issues that need to be resolved. I hope we can learn from the mistakes made in K-12's overreliance on tests and student growth scores, so we can have an honest conversation on how all stakeholders can work together to improve our K-12 teacher preparation programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Randi Weingarten
President

RW:emc opeiu#2 afl-cio



June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Senator Harkin,

On behalf of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), I am writing to you in support of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA), and in particular, to emphasize how important it's Title IX will be to assure that people with disabilities have equal access to higher education and the supports necessary to succeed in their postsecondary studies.

Postsecondary education has become a prerequisite for the jobs in today's economy. Unfortunately, people with disabilities still face major barriers in accessing and succeeding in higher education opportunities, which contributes to their very high rate of un- and underemployment.

Title IX of the HEAA will assure that people with disabilities have equal access to higher education and the supports necessary to succeed in their postsecondary studies by creating national technical assistance centers for disability support services at institutions of higher education and for college students and their families, establishing new transition programs for students with intellectual disability, improving the accessibility of instructional materials, and creating a commission on serving and supporting students with psychiatric disabilities.

For people with disabilities today, higher education is not a luxury but an imperative—it is their best pathway to a secure economic future. Reauthorization of the HEAA, and in particular it's Title IX, advances the interests of the nation by seeing to it that every person who could contribute to a strong, competitive economy following their postsecondary education is provided with the opportunities to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret A. Nygren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Margaret A. Nygren, EdD
Executive Director & CEO

Knowledge | Support | Empowerment



June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Disability Policy Office
404 Senate Hart Office Building

Dear Senator Harkin:

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) fully supports the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA). As the nation's largest disability rights organization, we promote the independence, economic self-sufficiency, and full political participation of people with disabilities. We believe that full access to higher education is crucial to achieving these goals.

Students with disabilities remain underrepresented on college campuses, as they only comprise approximately 10 percent of the nation's undergraduates. It is crucial that colleges and universities encourage more students with disabilities to enroll, while also retaining and supporting them throughout their higher education. In 2011, 88% of colleges reported enrolling individuals with disabilities; however, faculty and staff are not necessarily prepared to serve these students. About half of institutions admitted they lack the resources to properly train their employees on accessibility issues.

In light of these facts, we applaud your efforts to improve youth transition programs and monitor the operation of disability and psychiatric support services at institutions of higher learning. The bill's focus on peer mentorship, independent living skills, accessibility, integrated socialization, and academic enrichment will better prepare students with disabilities to successfully graduate from college. As a result, students will be able to become self-advocates for their education throughout their lives. Furthermore, the training of staff and faculty will allow students to work and learn in a comfortable and appropriately challenging environment. HEAA will empower all members of the educational system and ensure that students possess the skills needed to enter the workforce.

AAPD commends your leadership on the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA), which improves access to post-secondary learning for students with disabilities. We stand ready to work with you to ensure its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Perriello", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Mark Perriello



June 17, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: The Upcoming Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

Dear Chairman Harkin,

Young Invincibles is a nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for young adults, and we are committed to ensuring that college is accessible for all. We write to thank you for your comprehensive discussion draft signaling your priorities for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

We appreciate that you crafted a bill containing several student-centric reforms to our nation's higher education system, while including greater consumer protections against low-performing institutions. The draft is a strong step forward in our efforts to reform our higher education system to work better for students.

We look forward to working with the Chairman and his staff as this proposal and others are discussed and evaluated in the coming months. Thank you again for your hard work in putting forth a thoughtful draft with an eye toward higher education access and success for all students.

Sincerely,
Young Invincibles

Chairman Tom Harkin
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

June 24, 2014

U.S. PIRG Applauds Chairman Harkin's Higher Education Affordability Act

Dear Chairman Harkin,

On behalf of our student members, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group applauds Chairman Harkin for introducing the discussion draft of the Higher Education Affordability Act, which will act to guide policy toward increasing college access and affordability.

The rising cost of higher education is a major concern right now as states continue to struggle with the aftereffects of the Great Recession. Forty-eight states are spending, on average, twenty three percent less per student than they did before the recession. As a result, tuition and fees continue to rise while students and families turn to loans to cover their costs. Also, banks and financial firms are driving up students' costs by charging high fees and unfair fees that are hard to avoid. And, while Congress has made some progress in keeping college affordable in the past few years through raising the maximum Pell grant and instituting mandatory loan counseling, there is still significant room to improve the system. Student loan debt now currently standing at \$1.2 trillion, and against this backdrop, we view this package as a strong step toward bringing relief to beleaguered students and families, by lowering costs and keeping student loan debt affordable and manageable.

A critical part of keeping college affordable is to help students and families who borrow to pay for college do it sensibly, and at the right price. Understanding the role that financial aid plays in increasing or decreasing college costs is a daunting task for students, many of whom have never faced a price tag so high, nor had debt before. Students, families, and borrowers will benefit from the Chairman's proposal to standardize the depiction of the financial aid award, so students are able to compare aid awards campus to campus, and are not misled into under-estimating the amount of loans they will assume. The proposal also strengthens the mandatory loan counseling that student borrowers undergo by adding in more personalized information into the content, reviewing information about income-driven repayment options, and reminding students of the generous repayment terms that federal loans carry compared to private student loans. The legislation will help private loan borrowers control their debt amounts by requiring that private loans are certified by the borrower's college first.

Additionally, we are thrilled that the Chairman's package tackles the problem of students who are being needlessly steered into campus sponsored bank accounts. Two in five students are exposed to campus-affiliated bank accounts that may drive up their costs and put fee barriers between students and their financial aid. While the Department of Education is currently drafting a rule to deliver safeguards for students exposed to these accounts on campus, we believe that the Chairman's proposal provides a strong alternative approach to solve the problem, by preventing push-marketing tactics that steer students into these accounts and banning the ability of colleges and banks to share in the revenue made from the fees that students pay. We look forward to working with the Chairman to ensure that all campus banking products are subject to these conditions, not just those products that are co-branded with the college logo. We also are supportive of the Chairman's call for the creation of a new debit card product centrally negotiated through the U.S. Department of Education.

As noted, the withdrawal of state funding for public institutions of higher education has shifted the burden of paying for college to students and families. Left unchecked, this trend will continue to threaten college affordability. Responsibility for paying for college has historically been a shared partnership among many partners, including the federal government and states. We wholeheartedly support the Chairman's aim to establish a federal-state partnership that provides meaningful grant incentives to states that invest in their public higher education systems. When state investment increases, tuition and fee increases for students and families will lessen, as will their reliance on loans to pay for college.

Once students are at the right college for the right price, the next concern is that their student loans stay manageable and affordable in repayment. Students need strong investment in grant aid – it's far better than loans and better targeted to those who need it. Unfortunately, right now the Pell Grant covers the smallest portion of tuition costs in history, and recent cuts squeezed over one hundred thousand students out of the program. To help put the program back on track, the Chairman's package resuscitates year-round Pell Grants and restores aid eligibility for some students, and even more should be done.

Low student loan interest rates are also critical to affordability. With the Chairman as our champion, last year we fought the battle to stop the rate hike that over seven million borrowers faced last year on July 1 by extending the low 3.4 percent interest rate on Stafford loans for one more year, with the hope of using this year to develop a comprehensive student loan reform package that could truly deliver lower rates for borrowers. In what was sold to the public as a reversal of that rate hike, the student-loan deal that prevailed indeed cut interest rates in the near term. But by next July, rates are expected to rise higher than the rates borrowers would have paid under the previous policy and will continue in that direction for the foreseeable future. We are disappointed to see that the Chairman's package does not address the higher and higher costs that borrowers must shoulder in the deal over its ten year time frame, and look forward to discussing how best to achieve this reform in the package moving forward.

Income Based Repayment (IBR) is another loan manageability tool that could use improvement. There are just over a million borrowers enrolled in this alternative repayment plan, yet well over five million borrowers are past due on their bills. The Chairman takes a common sense approach by automatically enrolling student loan borrowers into IBR after six months of delinquent payments. Also, we are concerned that actions by banks and financial firms in repayment are undermining borrowers' credit reports, and we support the Chairman's call for more information into student loan delinquency and its impact on the credit reports of delinquent borrowers.

Student loan manageability includes helping borrowers with high debt loads to live better with that debt. Banks and financial firms can exacerbate the problems that these high-debt borrowers face already. The Chairman's plan builds in new safeguards for these borrowers and provides them relief when victimized by predatory or unfair practices.

Taken in total, these proposals for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act will reduce costs and make student loans more manageable for borrowers. We applaud Chairman Harkin's continued leadership on these issues and will continue to work with him to deliver the best possible improvements that will keep college accessible and affordable for all Americans.

Sincerely,

U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Wednesday, June 25th, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of 1.5 million student members across the country, we are pleased with your work to draft a Higher Education Act reauthorization bill based on the tenets of access, affordability, and transparency.

State disinvestment is the main driver of rising tuition. Thus, we are particularly pleased with the inclusion of a federal-state partnership in the reauthorization. A federal-state partnership is a necessary carrot to hold states accountable in funding public higher education. We applaud you for prioritizing new standards for third-party servicers, streamlining the income-based repayment plans, and including automatic enrollment for delinquent loans. These are important steps to stop \$1.3 trillion of student loan debt from ballooning to two trillion. These provisions do more than current laws for struggling students.

Many measures of your reauthorization advance our vision: in which students—no matter their race, class, gender, sexuality, or documentation status—have equal access and opportunity to succeed in college. We believe that federal student aid should be opened to students who qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and that high interest rates for the federal Stafford loan should be reduced.

Our student membership is appreciative that you are starting the dialogue on the Higher Education Act reauthorization now. Your proposals are better than current law, and the US Student Association is committed to working with Congress towards free public higher education.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sophia Zaman, President
United States Student Association



1211 CONNECTICUT AVE NW, SUITE 406
WASHINGTON, DC 20036

202.640.6570 PHONE
202.223.4005 FAX

June 24, 2014

Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

With the release of your discussion draft, the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEA Act), we write to thank you for your longstanding and continued leadership in increasing college access and success for America's students, and in ensuring that institutions are held accountable for serving students and taxpayers well. The HEA Act is a thoughtful and comprehensive proposal to increase college affordability, access and success, addressing the critical roles of students, institutions, states, and the federal government.

We enthusiastically support the HEA Act's proposed changes related to income-driven repayment of student loans, which streamline the multiple existing plans into one improved plan that better targets benefits to borrowers who need them the most. The improved plan caps payments at 10 percent of income, discharges any remaining debt after 20 years of payments, never capitalizes interest, and helps prevent default by automatically enrolling borrowers if they have not made a required payment for six months. We have recommended many of these changes for years and are pleased that they are included.

We also strongly support provisions in the bill that create key protections for students and taxpayers, including prohibiting all schools from using federal student aid funds for advertising, marketing, or recruiting; stopping the manipulation of cohort default rates; banning mandatory arbitration agreements; and strengthening the 90/10 rule to ensure for-profit colleges are not overly reliant on federal taxpayer funding. The bill also makes important changes to improve the servicing and collection of federal student loans, including meaningful new protections for borrowers. These changes will help borrowers access more manageable repayment strategies, avoid delinquency and default, and get out of default and back into repayment. For financially distressed borrowers with private education loans, the bill restores fair treatment in bankruptcy.

The HEA Act also includes a groundbreaking proposal to help ensure college is affordable for all Americans by providing significant new financial incentives for states to invest in their public colleges. We strongly support its provisions to provide students and families with early information about financial aid and enable them to apply for federal aid earlier by using the tax information available when they are typically applying to colleges. Additionally, the bill would make it much easier for students and families to identify affordable colleges, compare financial aid offers, figure out how to pay for college, borrow wisely and avoid risky private education loans, and select the loan repayment plan that is best for them.

As you refine this discussion draft, we look forward to working with you further to secure and improve Pell Grants. Research shows they are a critical and effective way to increase college access and success, yet the maximum grant now covers the lowest share of college costs since the start of the program. We also look forward to opportunities to further ensure that all schools are serving students well and to make comprehensive student loan reforms, including revisiting how interest rates are set on Federal loans and how to simplify the loan program and best target interest subsidies.

We thank you for your continued leadership in higher education, and for taking this important step toward comprehensive, student-centered reform of federal higher education policy through reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren Asher', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lauren Asher
President



Student Veterans of America
1625 K St. NW STE 320
Washington DC 20006
www.studentveterans.org

June 23, 2014

Chairman Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin,

On behalf of Student Veterans of America (SVA), a coalition of student veteran organizations on over 1,000 colleges and universities across the country, I am writing to express our support for your legislation, the "The Higher Education Affordability Act".

Our veterans face numerous obstacles in obtaining a college degree; from managing their campus experience as nontraditional students to navigating complex bureaucracies of the DoD and VA. This legislation will make that road a little smoother by ensuring our returning servicemembers and veterans receive the education benefits they have earned, along with the tools and resources to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

We also applaud your focus on strengthening consumer protections around the servicing of student loans. As the recent press accounts and enforcement action have highlighted there is a critical need to put in place strong rules to better protect not only for military families and veterans, but all student loan borrowers. This legislation puts in place a number of common sense provisions that will do just that.

The strong accountability measures which you seek to pass, addresses the concern that some colleges advertise the ability to provide credentials and certifications, which has been found to be a false resulting in a loss of benefit and education to student veterans. Such colleges, retain the tuition paid by the GI Bill while the student veteran is left with nontransferable credits and wasted benefits.

This legislation is an important step in the right direction, and signals a clear commitment to servicemembers and veterans. You have the full support of SVA.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Wayne Robinson", is written over a white background.

D. Wayne Robinson
Chief Executive Officer
Student Veterans of America



Native Hawaiian Education Council

June 23, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

Aloha Chairman Harkin and members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions:

Mahalo, *thank you*, for allowing us, the Native Hawaiian Education Council (NHEC), an opportunity to submit comments on the proposed reauthorization of the Higher Education Affordability Act, particularly Title III, which provides for Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions.

NHEC was established by the federal government under the Native Hawaiian Education Act (NHEA), which was authorized to close the educational achievement gap between Native Hawaiians and the general population, and to fulfill the trust relationship between the United States of America and Native Hawaiians. NHEA provides funding for innovative Native Hawaiian education programs that advance Hawaiian knowledge and content (Hawaiian language, values, cultural practice, history, etc.) or Western content using Hawaiian ways in their approach to program goals or delivery.

Given the role of NHEC to advocate for and make recommendations on Native Hawaiian education, NHEC strongly supports legislation that improve the affordability of higher education; the ability of students to manage their student loan debt; and the accountability and transparency of schools' activities and practices in order to help students and their families.

NHEC is especially supportive of changes in Title III that allow more flexibility to institutions on how they may use federal funds under this title. This increased flexibility will allow Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), such as the Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions to provide more services that are needed by students who are often the first in their families to attend college.



We are also pleased that the proposed legislation includes a new innovation fund for MSIs in Title VII. Like the NHEA, this provision calls for innovative programs to be developed in order to improve educational attainment. Given this purpose, NHEC would like to recommend that this section be strengthened by adding language to require reporting of the outcomes of the innovative programs so that the lessons of best practices can be shared and replicated. The reports should be sent to the U.S. Secretary of the Department of Education.

Again, we appreciate this opportunity to comment on this important bill, since the funding made available to MSIs through the Higher Education Affordability Act is necessary as we continue to move toward parity and beyond for our minority students, including Native Hawaiians.

Me ke aloha pumehana,



Maggie Hanohano
Chairwoman
Native Hawaiian Education Council





Marc Maurer, *President*

200 East Wells Street
at Jernigan Place
Baltimore, MD 21230
Phone 410 659 9314 **Fax** 410 685 5653
www.nfb.org

June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Higher Education Act Reauthorization

Dear Chairman Harkin:

This letter is to express support of the National Federation of the Blind for the introductory draft of the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEA). In particular we applaud the inclusion of provisions to improve access to instructional materials by students with disabilities. Blind students have many untapped talents and people with disabilities face an abysmal unemployment rate. It is essential that we ensure these students pursue higher education and receive the equal access and supports they need to succeed once they are there. Title IX of this reauthorization vehicle takes many sound steps to achieve these goals.

The top priority for higher education reform must be improved access to materials. Section 931 of Part C of Title IX authorizes the creation of voluntary accessibility guidelines for electronic instructional material and related information technology, and then incentivizes institutions of higher education to only use technology that conforms to those guidelines with a safe harbor from litigation. Currently, institutions of higher education are required by federal law to use accessible technology but, because this requirement lacks technical criteria to guide its success, the overwhelming majority of learning management systems, digital books, university web portals, lab software, and PDFs are inaccessible to students who have print disabilities. Consequently, schools resort to print-world accommodations in a digital world, erecting unexpected barriers for students with disabilities and putting schools at risk for enforcement. The guidelines will stimulate the creation of a viable digital marketplace, making it easier for schools to comply with the law and ensuring that blind students can benefit from educational technology and have equal access to critical course information. This section implements the recommendation of a Congressionally-authorized study and mirrors language found in the Technology, Education and Accessibility in College and Higher Education (TEACH) Act, S. 2060, a bipartisan bill that is endorsed by numerous disability consumer groups and the Association of American Publishers. This non-controversial approach will create systemic change for students with disabilities, and does so without creating new requirements for schools or mandates on technology developers.

Section 932 of Part C also creates a model demonstration transition program for students who are deaf-blind. We enthusiastically support a concentration on improving supports for and information surrounding transition from high school to college and transition from college to the workplace. Students with disabilities must learn how to self-advocate, develop independent living skills, and get work experience if they are going to succeed in college, and most importantly, attain jobs in integrated, competitive employment. This bill also establishes two National Technical Assistance Centers for students with disabilities, their families, and the institutions that serve them. We are glad Congress wants to invest in this much-needed assistance, and hope these provisions can be expanded to facilitate the creation of best practices for effectively developing and sharing resources on accessible instructional materials, embossed and digital Braille, and tactile graphics materials (particularly in STEM courses and laboratory classes) across universities. These programs and Centers will address many of the inadequacies of the current system.

Higher education reform is an opportunity to address some of the most pressing issues of today, especially for students with disabilities. We urge the Senate to move swiftly to pass this bill and make meaningful change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John G. Paré Jr.", written in a cursive style.

John G. Paré Jr.
Executive Director for Advocacy and Policy
National Federation of the Blind



1201 16th St., N.W. | Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: (202) 833-4000

Dennis Van Roekel
President

Lily Eskelsen Garcia
Vice President

Rebecca S. Pringle
Secretary-Treasurer

John Stocks
Executive Director

June 24, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1502

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of the three million members of the National Education Association and the students they serve, we thank you for sharing your discussion draft to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. We especially appreciate the focus on making higher education more affordable, reducing student debt, and increasing accountability and transparency in every area. We also appreciate your thoughtful revision of Title II to reflect current “best practices” and address the pressing challenges our nation faces with regard to teacher preparation, and for recognizing faculty and staff as stakeholders in the higher education enterprise.

Affordable higher education

Americans deserve degrees, not debt. The student debt burden stands at \$1.2 trillion and exceeds total credit card debt. Two out of three students must borrow money to attend college. Many graduate with crushing debt that is also hurting America’s economy—they cannot afford to buy homes or cars, start businesses, support families, invest, or contribute to economic growth in other ways.

NEA student member Brittany Jones testified before the Senate Budget Committee about the impact of the debt burden on her own life. “Student loan debt has been the driving force of my decisions for the last eight years of my life,” she said. “And according to my current repayment plan, it is projected to be that way for the next 25 years of my life, well into the years when I should be planning my retirement. It should not be that way.”

The federal government should be protecting students from overcharges and unmanageable debt, not balancing the budget on their backs. We thank you for endeavoring to make higher education more affordable by:

- Taking steps to move troubled loans into an income-contingent program.
- Providing opportunities to refinance student loans.
- Emphasizing loan forgiveness.
- Providing consumer information for students.
- Restricting the marketing of extra services to students while they are still in school.
- Strengthening the ban on incentive compensation for recruiters.
- Creating a relief fund for students cheated by for-profit lenders.

- Requiring cancellation of private education loans when the borrower dies.
- Establishing a federal-state partnership to encourage states to invest in higher education to help keep costs down.
- Supporting creative approaches such as grants for persistence and program completion.

Teacher preparation

In Title II, we appreciate your efforts to ensure that educators are profession-ready and fine-tune reporting requirements to help improve teacher preparation programs. In particular, we applaud the focus on residencies in teacher quality partnership grants. NEA believes residencies are the best way to ensure that teacher candidates are “profession-ready,” defined as:

- Extensive opportunities to develop and learn teaching and basic classroom management skills.
- Demonstrating the ability to plan and deliver instruction to students with different learning styles, and also to assess and support student learning.
- Working with accomplished educators to understand the value of collaboration and reflection.
- Learning firsthand the importance of the connection between home and school.

NEA believes all teachers should be profession-ready from the first day they enter their classrooms as teachers-of-record. To help ensure they are, preparation programs should include comprehensive residency programs that go beyond traditional student teaching. Specifically, teacher candidates should engage in a series of school-based experiences and teaching opportunities under the guidance of an accomplished teacher while simultaneously applying theories learned from coursework. For details, please see [*Teacher Residencies: Redefining Preparation Through Partnerships*](#).

Teacher candidates should also be required to demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge necessary for effective classroom practice before becoming teachers-of-record—for example, by completing a classroom-based performance assessment like edTPA. Developed by the profession for the profession in collaboration with Stanford University, edTPA requires candidates to demonstrate mastery of subject matter and pedagogy in their field, as well as the ability to improve student learning. For details, please see [*Profession-Ready Teachers*](#) and [*Prepare Tomorrow's Teachers with edTPA*](#).

We look forward to working with you to bring reauthorization of the Higher Education Act to fruition.

Sincerely,



Mary Kusler
Director, Government Relations

June 23, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), I applaud your work to reauthorize and strengthen the Higher Education Act (HEA). For too long, the reauthorization of HEA has lingered as the student experience with accessing financially-viable quality education has fundamentally changed. Thank you for your leadership and initiative in putting forth a bill that will assist aspiring students across demographic and income profiles obtain affordable higher education that meets the increasing demands of today's competitive economy.

As Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, you and your Committee staff have shown a deliberative and thoughtful approach to our nation's higher education system. I particularly appreciate the great strides you have made toward improving access, affordability, transparency, and accountability among postsecondary institutions. From expanding federal financial assistance to creating more robust reporting criteria, the reauthorization establishes important markers in helping low-income and minority students graduate on-time and on sound financial footing.

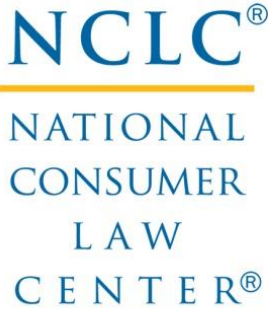
In addition to the modernization of the financial aid system and efforts to ensure minority participation in postsecondary education, NCLR is pleased to see the inclusion of American Dream Grants. As you know, children brought to this country through no fault of their own and who have known no other home are Americans already. Providing ways to make college affordable and accessible for this population is a critical investment in our nation's future.

While the reauthorization has made great strides, much remains to be done toward optimizing educational attainment for Latinos nationwide. As this bill moves through the Committee process and onto the Senate floor, I hope that your staff will continue to work with NCLR on achieving the best possible final bill.

Sincerely,



Delia Pompa
Senior Vice President, Programs



June 25, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support of Higher Education Affordability Act

Dear Chairman Harkin,

The National Consumer Law Center's Student Loan Borrower Assistance Project writes this letter on behalf of our low-income clients in support of the Higher Education Affordability Act. The Higher Education Affordability Act prioritizes borrowers and taxpayers, not private profits, and will help hold fraudulent schools accountable for inferior outcomes.

We applaud your leadership on behalf of student borrowers and taxpayers. We look forward to working with you to push even harder to improve access to affordable, quality higher education without burdening students and their families with lifetimes of debt.

Current federal aid policies and practices hammer students who do not succeed the first time around. The extreme collection powers that kick in after student loan default impede economic productivity by preventing many students from returning to school, succeeding, repaying their loans, and entering the labor force.

The legislation addresses this problem in a number of ways. For example, we are particularly encouraged that this bill will give borrowers more chances to get out of default through the rehabilitation program. Currently, borrowers who are desperately trying to get out of default into repayment have only a limited number opportunities to do so, thus leaving some

borrowers with no options remaining. Giving borrowers another chance is critical not only in their individual lives, but also for society.

We support the provisions to rein in collection fees that compound the pain for borrowers and limit their future opportunities to go back to school, enter repayment, and contribute productively to society and the economy.

There are many problems with the current student loan collection system, including the government's funneling of collection costs to private collectors even when they expend little or no effort to collect. The Higher Education Affordability Act takes dramatic steps to rein in collection costs and ensure that borrowers are only charged fees that are actually incurred.

We are also encouraged that this bill will take steps to improve servicing standards for student loan borrowers. Although there is some existing statutory and regulatory authority to extend protections to student loan borrowers, there remain large gaps in the protections available to federal and private student loan borrowers compared to other consumers.

Unfortunately, consistent quality service is not the current borrower experience. Among other problems, we see federal student loan servicers pushing borrowers into the quickest options, such as forbearance, rather than explaining and assisting borrowers to obtain more favorable long-term solutions, such as income-based repayment. The servicing system has become so confusing that an entire industry of for-profit "debt relief" companies has sprung up to supposedly provide the services that the free government servicers are failing to provide.

We also support the creation of automatic entry into income based repayment (IBR) for borrowers in late stage delinquency. IBR provides many benefits for borrowers, yet current participation is low due mainly to lack of awareness and operational barriers. Creating an automatic entry, especially during late stage delinquency, will allow more borrowers to benefit. Most important, automatic placement into IBR will allow borrowers to avoid the draconian costs of collection and extraordinary government collection powers.

In addition, we support the bill's provision to allow some borrowers to use their Social Security Administration (SSA) disability determinations when applying for a total and permanent disability discharge. This change will reduce unnecessary administrative hurdles for a significant number of disabled borrowers.

The legislation also contains key improvements for private loan borrowers, including mandatory certification and mandatory consumer protections as conditions of certification.

Finally, we are encouraged that this bill begins to tackle the problem of students who are being needlessly steered into campus sponsored bank accounts. Two in five students are exposed to campus-affiliated bank accounts that may drive up their costs and inhibit them from choosing the account that works best for them.

We look forward to working with you and other legislators committed to doing what is best for borrowers and taxpayers. In addition to supporting this legislation, we hope to work

together to push for further reforms to alleviate the financial distress of all borrowers, including parent PLUS borrowers, and restore a safety net. Ultimately, we need to work even harder to ensure that borrowers can more easily get a fresh start out of default, eliminate short-sighted destructive policies such as Earned Income Tax Credit and Social Security offsets, restore full bankruptcy rights and restore a statute of limitations on student loan collections

Thank you for your continued leadership on these issues.

Sincerely,

Deanne Loonin , Director
Persis Yu, Staff Attorney

National Consumer Law Center's
Student Loan Borrower Assistance Project



National College Access Network

Building Connections. Advancing Equity. Promoting Success.

1001 Connecticut Avenue NW June 23, 2014

Suite 632

Washington, DC 20036

Phone (202) 347-4848

www.collegeaccess.org

The Honorable Chairman Tom Harkin
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
615 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Board Members

Pranav Kothari
Board President
Strive

Harold Brown
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EdWorks

Gloria Nemerowicz, Ph.D.
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Marlene Ibsen
Travelers Foundation

Paul Luna
Helios Education Foundation

Kim Mazzuca
10,000 Degrees

Sue McMillin
TG

Herb Tillery
College Success Foundation –
District of Columbia

Ricardo Torres
National Student Clearinghouse

Executive Director

Kim Cook

Dear Senator Harkin:

The National College Access Network is encouraged by the early discussions to reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965 as the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA). As a network of approximately 400 members nationwide with a mission to build, strengthen, and empower communities committed to college access and success, we are pleased that many of the proposals align with our policy priorities to make college affordable and the college decision process more transparent. Specifically, the required use of prior prior year tax data in the FAFSA form, restoration of a year-round Pell Grant program, and efforts to simplify the financial aid process including standardized financial aid award letters and strengthened loan counseling will all benefit NCAN's students. These are all issues that NCAN stressed in my November testimony to the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Understanding that this legislative proposal is still in development, NCAN supports the following components of this bill:

Affordability

- Moving to universal use of the prior prior year tax information data to determine financial aid eligibility will allow students to apply for financial aid while they are completing college applications, rather than after.
- A year round Pell Grant program will increase or even accelerate graduation rates as students will be motivated to enroll full-time and stay continuously enrolled.
- A state-federal partnership that incents states to continue their investment in education will help to deter the growth in tuition for students at public institutions.

Existing Student Debt

- Simplifying the many income-driven loan repayment plans into one universal plan will make communicating loan repayment options easier, leading to more students taking advantage of them.



National
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Accountability

- Studying the best way for the federal government to hold institutions accountable will ultimately give students confidence that they are attending an institution that will give them a valuable credential or degree.

Transparency

- Notifying students of their likely eligibility for federal student aid starting in 8th grade will let low-income students know that college is an option for them and that financial aid will be available, helping to set their college-going aspirations.
- Using a standardized financial aid award letter will allow students to compare, without confusion over types of aid, the financial aid packages they would receive from various institutions.
- Strengthening student loan entrance and exit counseling is an important step toward improving the financial literacy of students so that they make responsible borrowing decisions.

NCAN thanks you, Senator Harkin, for your leadership on these important issues to increase affordability and expand transparency for students in higher education. We look forward to further discussions on these topics.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kim Cook
Executive Director



National Center for Learning Disabilities
The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed

June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Alexander:

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) works to ensure that the nation's 60 million children, adolescents and adults with learning and attention issues have every opportunity to succeed in school, work and life. NCLD writes to express our support for the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA). We are pleased that the bill thoughtfully addresses and integrates the needs of students with disabilities throughout. We know that all students can achieve high standards when they have the appropriate supports and services that allow them to succeed.

We are pleased that HEAA recognizes and responds to the reality that students with disabilities need better information to successfully enroll in postsecondary programs and complete them. Currently, only 45 percent of youth with disabilities go on to college within four years of graduating high school. What's more, even though 94 percent of students with learning disabilities receive accommodations or support in high school, only 17 percent do the same in college. There is a problem in this transition and we can do better.

One answer to this problem are the National Technical Assistance Centers for Higher Education Access included in this bill. NCLD is pleased that these Centers are included because they will do two important things: First, they will provide useful and comprehensive information to students with disabilities on the choices available to them in higher education. Next, they will provide much-needed training, technical assistance, and professional development to faculty and administrators at institutes of higher education. These TA Centers will help millions of students with disabilities access higher education and fulfil their promise.

Additionally, the provisions in Title II illustrate a thoughtful analysis about how to ensure our nation's teaching workforce is well prepared to meet the needs of today's diverse classrooms. Though we need more research into teacher preparation overall to determine what works and how to evaluate teacher preparation programs, we know that students with disabilities are part of every classroom and for all students to thrive, teachers in general education classrooms need to be equipped to meet the needs of diverse learners. Thus, NCLD appreciates this section's overall focus on including students with disabilities in all aspects of teacher preparation. NCLD is specifically pleased that HEAA would reauthorize the Teach to Reach program, which serves to prepare general education teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and also includes concepts from the LEARN Act, such as the definition of "effective literacy instruction."

The integration of services for students with disabilities throughout this legislation serves as recognition of one success of IDEA, namely, more and more, we expect all students to proceed to appropriate post-secondary college and career pathways and a fulfilling life.

Indeed, our nation cannot succeed unless all of its students do. We look forward to working with you to ensure that we prepare teachers to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms and support students and families throughout the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Wendorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James H. Wendorf
Executive Director

Cc: Members, Senate HELP Committee



June 24, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), I write to express support for the many provisions in the Higher Education Affordability Act that will benefit millions of students. NASFAA represents nearly 20,000 financial aid professionals at approximately 3,000 colleges and universities; NASFAA member institutions serve nine out of every ten undergraduates in the U.S.

We support your focus on increasing college affordability, addressing loan debt, strengthening accountability, and improving transparency. We are particularly encouraged to see the inclusion of a number of proposals that the financial aid community has championed, including:

- Reinstating year-round Pell Grants;
- Including “ability to benefit” eligibility criterion for certain programs;
- Mandating the use of prior-prior year income data in need analysis;
- Expanding early notification of potential financial aid eligibility to students;

Each of these important policy proposals will increase and improve college access and affordability, particularly for those students who need our assistance the most.

Concerns about student debt are growing, and we commend you for taking steps in this bill to address this vital issue. Consolidating the various income-driven repayment plans into a single plan will make it easier for students to understand and use those benefits. Automatically enrolling delinquent borrowers into income-driven repayment will help spare borrowers from the awful consequences of loan default. We support your plan to extend additional borrower protections and oversight into the private student loan market. The inclusion of private

education loans and loans made under Title VII and Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act in the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) would give borrowers a comprehensive snapshot of their total educational debt burden.

We know this bill is a first step in the reauthorization process and look forward to working with you to ensure there are no unintended consequences related to your proposed provisions on loan counseling, definitions and data on graduation and default rates, institutional accountability metrics, and new consumer disclosure requirements.

On behalf of our membership, I commend you for introducing this important legislation that will spur this conversation forward—and for your continued commitment to the programs that aid our nation's college-going students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Draeger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Justin Draeger
President



National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc.

225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 420, Alexandria, VA 22314

Tel: 703/519-3800 Fax: 703/519-3808 www.nasdse.org

June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), I write to thank you for including language in your bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) -- the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA) -- that supports students with disabilities in higher education programs. Specifically, your bill calls for (1) national technical assistance centers for higher education access and (2) transition programs for students with intellectual disabilities. NASDSE believes that these programs can help to ensure that students with disabilities have access to higher education programs that will prepare them for higher-paying jobs in the workforce.

In addition, your bill recognizes and supports the need for accessible instructional materials, which are critical to providing essential supports to students with disabilities. NASDSE also thanks you for establishing a research center that will examine approaches for supporting students with psychiatric disabilities.

We note that your bill also calls for the establishment of a data center. The Department of Education already collects an enormous amount of data – data that it can do little more with other than to require its collection. NASDSE has concerns about the establishment of yet another data center and the focus on more data collection. Given the limited funds that Congress is willing to make available for these programs, we would prefer to see funding put into the actual programs as opposed to a costly data center that will not provide any guidance to IHEs about how to develop and/or expand these programs.

NASDSE welcomes the opportunity to be engaged with you and other members of the Senate about crafting a new HEA bill that will meet the needs of all students, and we thank you for putting a spotlight on the needs of students with disabilities in your bill.

Please feel free to contact Nancy Reder, NASDSE's director of government relations, to work with you as your bill moves forward. Nancy can be reached at nancy.reder@nasdse.org or (703) 519-1506.

Sincerely,

Theron (Bill) East, Jr.

Theron (Bill) East, Jr., Ed.D.
Executive Director



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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*Enhancing the mental health and
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June 20, 2013

Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Dirksen Senate Office Building 428
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

On behalf of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), we thank you for your work on the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA), specifically Title IX, which focuses on students with disabilities. NASP represents more than 25,000 school psychologists who work with students, educators, and families to support the academic achievement, positive behavior, and mental wellness of all students, especially those who struggle with barriers to learning. We believe all students should have access to the supports they need to be successful. We are pleased that Title IX of HEAA would help students with disabilities successfully transition to post-secondary education and improve their self-advocacy skills, as well as provide technical assistance to colleges and universities to better enable them to support the needs of students with disabilities.

We also fully support the creation of the Commission on Serving and Supporting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities in Institutions of Higher Education. These students have higher rates of college withdrawal and lower rates of degree completion than their non-disabled peers. Although there is extensive research on the relationship between mental health and achievement in K-12 education, there is little researching examining this relationship in higher education. This commission will help identify the systemic barriers that impact students with psychiatric disabilities and provide recommendations for how these students can be better served by institutions of higher education.

We appreciate your dedication to students, your hard work toward reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, and your commitment to students with disabilities. NASP welcomes the opportunity to work with you and other committee members to assist with the revision of this and other related legislation. For further assistance, please contact Kelly Vaillancourt, PhD, Director of Government Relations at kvallancourt@naspweb.org. Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,


Susan Gorin, CAE
Executive Director



June 19, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) to express support for your efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. NACDD serves as the national voice of the 56 State and Territorial Councils on Developmental Disabilities. We support the DD Councils in implementing the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) while promoting the interest and rights of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Chairman, the Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA) exemplifies the values of the DD Act in that it provides a wide variety of supportive services to integrate people with developmental disabilities into the community—including evidence-based supports, support for STEM training, greater access to educational materials, mentoring and networking opportunities, transition programs for post-secondary and higher education, technical assistance to develop student self-advocacy skills and further development of teacher preparedness programs for students with disabilities. This legislation is crucial in moving forward the education agenda of the disability community and we would gladly welcome the programs and provisions it would create. We applaud your work to improve access to postsecondary education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

If you have additional questions about our support of this bill, please contact me at egrant@nacdd.org or 202-506-5813.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Esmé v. Grant" followed by a stylized flourish.

Esmé Grant, Esq.
Director of Public Policy
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

NACAC

National Association for College Admission Counseling
...guiding the way to higher education

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June 19, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin,

On behalf of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), I write to express our support for the Higher Education Affordability Act.

Founded in 1937, NACAC is an organization of more than 13,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education ("college"). NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice, which can be found on our website (www.nacacnet.org). Our members include school counselors, college admission officers, independent educational consultants, community-based organizations, and counselor educators, among others.

We commend you for your commitment to preserving the integrity of federal financial aid programs, protecting the interests of both students and taxpayers in the process. Your work in bringing to light evidence of waste, fraud and abuse in the federal aid programs has focused attention on the challenges facing students who have been lured into sub-prime educations, often to disastrous results.

Your proposal to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) with greatly strengthened program integrity measures will provide badly-needed protections against such consequences for students, and against further loss of precious taxpayer dollars for postsecondary education. Reforms included in your legislation will

- Significantly strengthen rules banning commissioned recruiting, as well as other arrangements that create inducements to circumvent ethical recruiting and educational practices.
- Provide a waiting period for students to allow time to compare admission and financial aid options *before* committing to enrollment at institutions that present a significant risk of dropout or default.

- Provide the Secretary of Education with authority to investigate potential instances of waste, fraud and abuse in a more timely fashion, and with more meaningful consequences should institutions attempt to circumvent program integrity regulations
- Redefine the ceiling on the amount of revenue a for-profit institution can derive from Title IV sources (currently the 90/10 rule) to require institutions to receive no more than 15 percent (or 85/15) of their funding from *any* federal source of financial assistance.
- Ensure that the federal government takes a coordinate approach to rooting out waste, fraud and abuse through interagency cooperation.

In addition to the above features, this legislation puts a premium on providing students and families with information that will assist them in making informed enrollment decisions. As such, we believe this bill constitutes an important continuation of work you began several years ago to ensure that taxpayer funds are spent wisely and effectively.

Thank you for introducing the Higher Education Affordability Act. NACAC strongly supports this legislation and hopes that Congress will enact it as soon as possible. For additional information on NACAC's priorities or if you have any questions, please contact David Hawkins, Director of Public Policy and Research at (703) 299-6809 or dhawkins@nacacnet.org.

Sincerely,



Joyce E. Smith
CEO, NACAC



June 23, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin,

On behalf of the nation's prekindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school level principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) thank you for your leadership in moving forward with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) by releasing a discussion draft.

NAESP and NASSP are pleased with many of the provisions contained in the draft related to the recruitment and preparation of the nation's principals. The proposal makes several positive changes to the programs that are critically important to improving our nation's education system and supporting the essential role of principals as they provide instructional leadership in schools.

Principals as School Leaders

Federal policies must provide support for principals and their role in fostering high-quality instruction and learning. The emphasis on school-level outcomes and student achievement places the school leader at the center of all school reform efforts. Today's principals and assistant principals are expected to be visionary leaders, instructional experts, building managers, assessment specialists, disciplinarians, community builders, and more. The impact of principals is second only to that of effective teachers in classrooms. NAESP and NASSP support the language in the bill to define the term "school leader" as principals and assistant principals within the school building who are responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations of the school, creates the optimum conditions for student learning, or is an early childhood program leader or director.

Principal Preparation

NAESP and NASSP support the authorization of a competitive grant program to recruit, support, and prepare principals and assistant principals to improve student academic achievement in high-need schools. We support a proposal that would create one-year residencies to train aspiring principals and would provide ongoing mentoring, support, and professional development for at least two years after the aspiring principals complete the residency and commence work as school leaders.

NAESP and NASSP support programs that require institutions of higher education and alternative principal preparation entities to select high-quality candidates to enter their programs and ensure that graduates are committed to serving as school leaders.

We also support proposals that require principal candidates to have demonstrated success as a classroom teacher. Individuals with strong instructional backgrounds are better able to relate to and lead teachers, and identify and model effective classroom practices. Candidates must also demonstrate abilities related to effective school leadership competencies, and show prior success in leading adults, have an advanced degree, and demonstrate a passion and commitment to leadership. Aspiring principals should receive training during a year-long pre-service residency that includes coaching from an effective principal, hands-on instructional leadership experience, and a curriculum that focuses on:

- effective instructional practices;
- recruiting and supporting effective staff and leadership teams;
- developing a school vision and continuous improvement plan;
- addressing the needs of specific student populations;
- managing school organizations; and
- engaging community members and parents.

The aspiring principal's skills should be assessed prior to the pre-service residency to determine the individual's strengths and improvement needs related to the effective school leadership competencies, and this data should be used to assist in developing and refining a data-based professional development plan. During the pre-service residency, aspiring principals should be assigned a mentor who possesses an interest in supporting a potential school leader through their skills in emotional intelligence, actual experience in the practice, and commitment to furthering the profession of educational leadership. New school leaders should receive the benefits of induction for up to three years. Mentoring can adapt to fit the inductee's needs and has the potential to span the entire career of the new leader if the relationship entails trust and authenticity. At a minimum, inductees need the support and guidance of a veteran during the formative years.

Rating of Preparation Programs

NAESP and NASSP have concerns about any proposed grant program that would require states to rate all preparation programs using value-added measures (VAM) and other measures. We believe there are multiple ways that states can strengthen accountability and standards for preparation programs without developing such a rating system, which will conflate the multiple concerns that research has exposed in terms of the efficacy of VAM with teacher and principal evaluations. We prefer an approach that measures leadership and instructional competencies to determine the readiness of an individual to serve as the principal and sets high standards for preparation programs.

Professional Development

The mission of NAESP and NASSP is to support strong instructional leadership skills of the nation's principals and other schools leaders. Pre-service and on-going, job-embedded professional development for principals has been largely overlooked by states and local districts because it receives little or no specific attention in current law. Research and evidence over the past ten years has proven that, next to excellent teachers, principals are the second most important factor to improved student performance.

NAESP and NASSP encourage any federal programs to focus on preparation and on-going training for principals related to their own professional learning needs, such as how to effectively

evaluate teachers in order to differentiate teacher performance accurately; provide useful feedback; and use evaluation results to inform decisionmaking about professional development, improvement strategies, and personnel decisions in their schools. We support proposals to assist principals in meeting their professional learning needs, particularly those opportunities for learning and growth that are tied to any state systems of principal evaluation. In addition, NAESP and NASSP support professional learning that supports appropriate instructional leadership practice to meet the needs of students and teachers related to the transitions from prekindergarten to the primary school years, as well as middle to high school.

Literacy

As active members of Advocates for Literacy, NAESP and NASSP support programs to develop or improve the implementation of comprehensive literacy programs from birth to grade 12. A renewed focus on comprehensive literacy education is crucial and necessary for all students to be college and career ready. These more rigorous standards will require the reorientation of literacy education as a systematic progression of skills across all grades. Specifically, college and career-ready standards will require increased text complexity and inclusion of informational text, which will necessitate more literacy instruction and support from birth throughout all levels of education. Addressing this issue within principal preparation programs is critical to help every principal acquire strong instructional leadership skills to support the learning needs of students.

Early Childhood

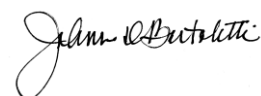
As states and districts continue to expand early childhood education programs, particularly connected to local elementary schools, it is imperative that policies are developed at the federal, state and districts levels to create systems that both recognize and build the capacity of elementary principal leadership within a pre-K-3 continuum. Preparation programs must help principals enter the profession understanding how to create a seamless continuum of learning from pre-K-3 and better grasp developmentally appropriate practices in the early years, and how to align both early learning and K-3 state standards, assessment and curriculum, as well as the use of data to improve teaching and learning.

NAESP and NASSP thank you for your efforts to reauthorize HEA and work to better support principals as they prepare to lead learning communities. We look forward to continuing the discussion, and working with you and members of the committee around educator preparation and the areas identified in this letter to ensure that the best, brightest and most committed become teachers and school leaders, they are well-prepared and supported on the job, and they are appropriately compensated for their effectiveness and hard work so they remain in the classroom and in the school. Both our organizations share your commitment to providing every student with a high quality education and the opportunity to succeed.

Sincerely,



Gail Connelly
Executive Director
NAESP



JoAnn Bartoletti
Executive Director
NASSP

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New Jersey City University
Jersey City, New Jersey

June 23, 2014

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The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Marcie Craig Post

An Incorporated Nonprofit
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Dear Chairman Harkin:

Since 1956, the International Reading Association (IRA) has been a nonprofit, global network of individuals and institutions committed to worldwide literacy. More than 53,000 members strong, the Association supports literacy professionals through a wide range of resources, advocacy efforts, volunteerism, and professional development activities. Our members promote high levels of literacy for all by improving the quality of reading instruction; disseminating research and information about reading; and, encouraging the lifetime reading habit. The mission of the IRA is to promote reading by continuously advancing the quality of literacy instruction and research worldwide.

The IRA is writing today to thank you for your commitment to advancing draft policies in the Higher Education Act reauthorization that will strengthen the investment in quality teacher preparation and professional development programs. The proposed provisions that will bolster and enhance teacher training focused on ensuring more students gain the literacy skills they need to succeed are those that:

- define and reinforce the essential components of effective literacy instruction for all students;
- support teacher training programs that focus on impacting high need students (e.g. English Language Learners and students with disabilities); and,
- reinforce the continuous advancement of the quality of literacy instruction and professional development.

The IRA believes in achieving consistent standards for teacher training programs and is encouraged by the opportunities the draft policies present in bringing more attention to improving the quality of reading teacher preparation programs. Please contact Dan Mangan, Director of Communications and Public Policy, at dmangan@reading.org should you wish to discuss the IRA's recommendations on the Higher Education Act. We look forward to working with you as the reauthorization continues.

Sincerely,

Marcie Craig Post
Executive Director

c: D. Mangan



The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc.
A national voice for special education rights and advocacy

June 24, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc. (COPAA) is an independent, nonprofit organization of parents, attorneys, advocates, and related professionals. COPAA members nationwide work to protect the civil rights and secure excellence in education on behalf of the 6.5 million children with disabilities in America. COPAA's mission is to serve as a national voice for special education rights and is grounded in the belief that every child deserves the right to a quality education that prepares him or her for meaningful employment, higher education and lifelong learning, as well as full participation in his or her community.

We are writing to thank you for your leadership and commitment to promoting transition from high school to college for students with disabilities as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. As currently proposed, the provisions that will make a difference to every student with a disability are:

- National Technical Assistance Center for Higher Education Access;
- National Data Center on Higher Education and Disability;
- Transition Programs for Postsecondary Students with Intellectual Disabilities;
- Requirements for providing accessible instructional materials including requests to the Access Board to develop guidelines on the accessibility of instructional materials used in higher education;
- Creation of a Commission on Serving and Supporting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities;
- Including special education as a high need focus for teacher training programs; and,
- Teacher training incentives in the use of universally designed curricula, textbooks and assessments so students can access instructional material and demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

COPAA is excited about the opportunities the reauthorization creates for students with disabilities. The added provisions not only create greater access to college but they also enhance and support the prospect of students gaining a meaningful education that lead to profound work experiences, careers and full-time employment. Please let us know how we can work with you to ensure these provisions are included in the final bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Marshall".

Denise Marshall
Executive Director



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June 19, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin,

On behalf of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the largest professional organization of teachers, administrators, higher education faculty, and researchers concerned with the education of children with disabilities and/or gifts and talents, I am writing to express support for key provisions of the Higher Education Affordability Act that will expand access to and success in postsecondary education opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

As you know, the unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities is 12.5%, more than twice that of individuals without disabilities at 5.6%. It is imperative that we modernize federal education laws to better prepare individuals with disabilities to participate in the workforce. One critical strategy to increasing the employment rate is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have meaningful access to, and can thrive once enrolled in, postsecondary opportunities.

To that end, the Council for Exceptional Children is pleased to support the following programs and provisions as part of the Higher Education Affordability Act:

1. **National Technical Assistance Centers for Higher Education Access** to support transition to and success in college, specifically the *National Technical Assistance Center for College Students with Disabilities and Their Families*; and the *National Technical Assistance Center for Disability Support Services at Institutions of Higher Education*.
2. **National Data Center on Higher Education and Disability** to increase transparency to incoming college students and their families regarding the availability of disability support services offered, among other resources.
3. **Transition Programs for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities including the** Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and model demonstration transition programs for students who are deaf-blind.
4. **Requirements for providing Accessible Instructional Materials for Students with Disabilities**
5. Creation of a **Commission on Serving and Supporting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities in Institutions of Higher Education**, to study the barriers and systemic issues facing postsecondary students with psychiatric disabilities and will make legislative and best practices recommendations for students with psychiatric disabilities.

CEC believes these provisions will help expand opportunities to postsecondary education and ensure individuals with disabilities, families and educators have relevant information better evaluate postsecondary options. Too often, it is difficult for individuals with disabilities and their families to navigate through the transition changes from high school to postsecondary education. As a result, far too many individuals with disabilities go without services they are able to receive, or tragically believe that postsecondary education is not a viable option to



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www.cec.sped.org

pursue. The changes outlined above will provide consumer transparency and more information to support more individuals with disabilities to have access to and thrive in postsecondary education.

While CEC supports the aforementioned provisions, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge another policy discussion regarding changes to teacher preparation program accountability that may be included in the Higher Education Affordability Act. Preparing future educators to address the diverse and complex needs of students is critically important, and making certain that educators are prepared on day-one is essential. To accomplish this, CEC supports changes to the Higher Education Affordability Act that emphasize all educators know how to implement accommodations for students with disabilities through intensive clinical experiences, residencies, mentorship, and induction programs. In addition, CEC has supported the use of a teacher performance assessment to gauge a teacher-candidate's ability to address real-world classroom experiences, prior to becoming the teacher-of-record.

Accountability for teacher preparation programs should emphasize these elements and be reluctant to include measures that are not valid and reliable, such as incorporating value-added measures of elementary and secondary school student performance. While many states are using VAM for their teacher evaluation systems, there is a large body of research that illustrates VAM is not valid for educators – special or general education teachers – of students with disabilities¹. Instead of doubling-down on teacher evaluation systems that are rooted in shaky research, CEC urges for a more constructive approach to evaluating teacher preparation programs.

As always, CEC commends you for your leadership on behalf of individuals with disabilities. Your relentless drive has resulted in numerous policy shifts that have benefited the health, education and welfare of individuals with disabilities. I look forward to continuing to work together to promote opportunities for individuals with disabilities to pursue postsecondary education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah A. Ziegler".

Deborah A. Ziegler
Associate Executive Director
Policy and Advocacy Services
Council for Exceptional Children

¹ McCaffrey, Daniel F. and Heather M. Buzick. Carnegie Knowledge Network, "Is Value-Added Accurate for Teachers of Students with Disabilities" January 2014. http://www.carnegieknowledgenetwork.org/briefs/teacher_disabilities/



CPSD
Real lives. Real work.

Collaboration
to Promote
Self-Determination

June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

The undersigned members of the Coalition to Promote Self-Determination (CPSD) are writing you to thank you for your leadership in working to reauthorize the Higher Education Act and to offer support of the proposed provisions outlined in Title IX of Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA), specifically the:

- National Technical Assistance Centers for Higher Education Access
- National Data Center on Higher Education and Disability
- Transition Programs for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities
- Requirements for providing Accessible Instructional Materials for Students with Disabilities that include requests to the Access Board
- The creation of a Commission on Serving and Supporting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities in Institutions of Higher Education.

CPSD is an advocacy network of 22 national organizations who have come together to bring about a significant modernization of the federal system of services and supports for persons with disabilities. CPSD does this by focusing on innovative public policy reform that promotes the effective transition of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities into adulthood by

preparing them to obtain optimal outcomes in education, employment, economic advancement, and independent living.

CPSD believes the reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) made significant strides toward establishing a firm commitment on the part of the federal government to invest in the creation of Post-Secondary Education (PSE) opportunities in an effort to put young adults with intellectual disabilities on an equal playing field with their non-disabled peers. CPSD wants to assure that the implementation of the provisions of HEOA are consistent the intent of Congress to create more inclusive PSE opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to pursue educational goals beyond high school, attain knowledge, technical expertise and skills in chosen areas of professional interest, and assimilate in typical PSE communities through social engagement and interaction with general student populations.

CPSD is strongly supportive of efforts to promote the creation of fully inclusive, individual support PSE models, and believes the Congressional intent outlined in the HEA reauthorization calls for a strong federal investment in such models.

Sincerely,

APSE

Autism Society

Association of University Centers on Disability

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

Institute for Educational Leadership

National Disability Institute

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Down Syndrome Society

National Fragile X Foundation

National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities

TASH

United Cerebral Palsy

June 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

We are writing in strong support of the *Higher Education Affordability Act*, which would make improvements to the Higher Education Act and make college more affordable and accessible for low-income and underprepared students. These reforms are much-needed in light of the growing proportion of jobs requiring a postsecondary education amid growth among the number of students for whom college is increasingly out of reach.

The Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success (C-PES) is a policy and advocacy center within CLASP. Its mission is to work for policies and investments that increase the number of low-income adults and disadvantaged youth who earn marketable postsecondary and industry credentials that are essential to opening doors to good jobs, career advancement, and economic mobility.

Over the last three decades, college costs have increased nearly four times faster than median family income. Financial aid has not filled the growing gap, and “unmet financial need”—the share of college costs not covered by financial aid or what the family is expected to contribute—has risen sharply. As a result, students must work more and borrow more, with debt now averaging more than \$26,000 for recent four-year college graduates. Rising costs and rising debt make college a riskier investment for students and families, who lack the information they need to shop around for colleges and programs of study that will provide them with the best opportunity to earn a credential and secure a good job after graduation. For students who are initially underprepared, these trade-offs can be particularly daunting; however, with the appropriate academic and financial supports, these students can thrive.

The *Higher Education Affordability Act* would improve college affordability and access for more low-income students and take steps to strengthen the transparency of institutional outcomes to facilitate better decision-making among students and their families. In particular, we strongly support the following provisions:

- Allowing Pell Grants to be used more flexibly year-round to respond to the changing needs and responsibilities of low-income students;
- Reducing the “work penalty” for students by increasing the amount of earnings students are able to preserve for living expenses when determining eligibility for financial aid;
- Supporting public/private partnerships designed to create postsecondary education and training opportunities matched with jobs in expanding fields, including contextualized adult education and occupational training programs;
- Expanding access to financial aid for college-ready students without a high school diploma or equivalency who are in career pathways programs;
- Instituting early awareness for Pell Grants; and
- Supporting the growth of innovative programs to improve outcomes and support success for underrepresented students.

As part of a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, we would also support provisions that expand access and affordability and improve completion even further. These include ending the taxation of Pell Grants as income, which would simplify the tax code and better align federal efforts to aid low income students across the grant and tax systems; piloting new models of student supports to increase completion rates among low-income and underprepared students; encouraging student placements through the Federal Work Study program to align more with student career goals and expanding the capacity of the program; and requiring states to gather and disclose aggregate student employment and earnings for all programs of study.

We commend you for introducing this important legislation and look forward to working with you to further improve college access and success for low-income and underprepared students through a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Olivia A. Golden". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Olivia Golden
Executive Director, CLASP



June 24, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin,

The Center for Responsible Lending wishes to express our appreciation for your efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act and make substantive reforms protecting students as consumers of financial products and services.

The current higher education system increasingly shifts its costs onto students in the form of federal and private student loans. At the same time, partnerships between colleges and companies have resulted in students being taken advantage of as captive audiences for marketing financial services and products, such as bank accounts. In this new paradigm, the government must be more than a lender and debt collector; it must become an agent for fair, responsible lending, so that educated citizens' entry into the workforce and economy is not hindered by unmanageable debt. The Higher Education Affordability Act is a first step towards that goal, and we look forward to working with you to strengthen it even further over the next several months.

We applaud your attention to reforming student loan servicing and collections. The lack of basic consumer protections afforded to student loan borrowers by servicers has been well documented by the CFPB, FDIC, and the Department of Justice. In some cases, abuses have resulted in borrowers paying more than they owe; failing to have access to all the repayment options and benefits for which they qualify; or ruining their credit. This legislation includes many provisions to create greater accountability of servicers and collectors, and basic protections for student loan borrowers that are already afforded to consumers taking out mortgage or other loans.

For-profit college reforms are also a key concern for us. As outlined in your exhaustive 2012 report of the for-profit college industry, while these institutions purport to provide greater access to non-traditional students seeking better job opportunities, they often fail to deliver these outcomes. Instead, they frequently leave vulnerable student borrowers with unmanageable levels of debt – especially students of color. While the sector enrolls only around 13% of all students, it accounts for nearly half of all student loan defaults. Reforms that hold for-profits more accountable are much needed, and addressed by several provisions in your legislation. These include: (1) a return to an “85/15” rule from the less stringent “90/10” in place today, which will require that at least 15% of for-profits' revenues are derived from sources other than federal funds; (2) including aid received from the Department of Defense by service members and veterans as part of the 85% of revenues that constitute federal student

aid; (3) barring for-profits from spending federal funds on marketing or similar activities that do not directly benefit students; and (4) banning mandatory arbitration agreements, which currently prevent students and staff of for-profit colleges from the public, fair resolution of their disputes.

We also applaud your reforms to private student loans. These loans are typically more expensive than federal loans, and offer fewer protections and repayment options. Despite the advantages of utilizing federal loans, many students take on private student loan debt before exhausting their federal aid options. No protections currently exist to ensure that students are encouraged to use federal aid before turning to private loans and are not over-borrowing. Your legislation would require schools to certify the amount needed by students and ensure they receive needed information about federal aid programs. In addition, it would return the right to private student loan borrowers to discharge this debt in bankruptcy, as is their right with other forms of consumer debt.

Finally, colleges are increasingly entering into partnerships with banks to offer students checking accounts, debit cards, or other financial products. These partnerships often involve revenue sharing agreements between the institution and the financial service provider that are not in the best interest of students. As a result, products with high or hidden fees may be aggressively marketed to students who would be better served by shopping for a product on their own. We share your concern that revenue sharing arrangements can create a conflict of interest for colleges, and hope that language in this section can be further strengthened to cover the broad range of these partnerships.

We look forward to working with you and other members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee to ensure student loan borrowers receive protections they deserve, and are not susceptible to unfair and abusive practices as they seek a post-secondary education or repay their loans. Specifically, in addition to the revenue sharing issue noted above, we would welcome the opportunity to provide further guidance on issues related to establishing a centralized complaint system; banning nondisclosure agreements between institutions of higher education and their staff and students; enhancing the Department of Education's ability to investigate fraud at for-profit colleges; and studying a more holistic, behavioral-oriented approach to preventing fraud in college recruiting.

With student loans making up such a large share of the overall consumer marketplace, and the federal government providing significant investments in the schools that receive student loan proceeds, comprehensive action is sorely needed.

Sincerely,

Maura Dundon, Senior Policy Counsel
Leslie Parrish, Deputy Director, Research

Center for Responsible Lending



Nothing about us without us!

June 20, 2014

Senator Tom Harkin
731 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), I write to thank you for bringing further attention to the needs of students with disabilities through your work on the Higher Educational Affordability Act (HEAA). ASAN is the leading nationwide organization run for and by autistic people and seeks to advance the civil rights of autistic people and the intellectual and developmental disability community as a whole.

As a self-advocacy organization, we receive frequent feedback from our members about challenges they face when attempting to access higher education. ASAN's *Navigating College* handbook includes essays by a variety of Autistic students and former students who encountered disability-related challenges in postsecondary settings. Beginning with the applications process and continuing throughout their course of study, people with disabilities may encounter barriers in the form of inaccessible reading materials, campuses, and dormitories; difficulty securing needed instructional accommodations; and negative assumptions about disability on the part of administrators and instructors.

The HEAA includes programs that would help eliminate these barriers. These programs include national technical assistance centers to disseminate best practices in supporting, recruiting, and accommodating students with disabilities in higher education; a renewal of the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) with an increased focus on competitive employment and instruction in integrated settings; and initiatives to promote adoption of accessible instructional materials.

I also applaud your proposal to ensure that all individuals who graduate from degree programs in the field of education receive training on instruction of students with disabilities. This proposal would help ensure that all students with disabilities have the opportunity to learn in an inclusive, integrated setting alongside his or her nondisabled peers.

I look forward to working with your office as this legislation progresses.

Sincerely,

Samantha Crane, Director of Public Policy

June 20, 2014

Chairman Tom Harkin
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Disability Policy Office
404 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin,

I write to you on behalf of the Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD), the country's premiere professional organization committed to the full and equal inclusion of persons with disabilities in postsecondary education. With over 2,800 members representing 2,100 institutions of higher education as well as 36 state and multi-state Affiliate organizations, AHEAD is uniquely situated to understand the complexities of the systemic needs that will improve student participation, outcomes, and employment; as well as enhance the affordability and efficiencies that can further advance the success of both students with disabilities, and higher education systems and institutions, in this country.

It is from this uniquely-informed vantage point that AHEAD offers its strongest possible support for the language you have included in Title IX of the Higher Education Affordability Act Reauthorization.

You offer five truly visionary, readily achievable, crucial new proposals that, when implemented, will go a great distance in improving not only our country's higher education systems, but more importantly the positive outcomes for persons with disabilities who are the ultimate beneficiaries. Specifically, AHEAD highlights the vital importance of:

- The establishment of National Technical Assistance Centers to enhance educational access;
- The establishment of a National Data Center on Higher Education and Disability;
- The enhancement of existing, and establishment of new, transition programs for students with disabilities from secondary to postsecondary settings;
- The establishment of requirements for the provision of Accessible Instruction Materials (AIM) as a follow up to the important work done by the AIM Commission established under your recommendation during the last (then HEOA) reauthorization; and
- The creation of a Commission addressing the issues related to serving and including students with psychiatric disabilities in higher education.

AHEAD cannot overstate the importance of these five key components you advance during this reauthorization process, nor the organization's support and appreciation for your work – and that of your colleagues. AHEAD stands ready to support you, your Committee, and the Senate as a whole in any way we can as you proceed in this reauthorization; and looks forward to being of service to you all.

Sincerely,



Stephan J. Smith
Executive Director