

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2019

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Chairman
Education & Labor Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Education & Labor Committee
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building

Dear Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Chairman Alexander, and Ranking Member Murray,

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) writes to share our priorities as you consider the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). The CHC is committed to ensuring that every child in our country has access to a high-quality education. Since its founding in 1976, the CHC has advocated for the Latino community and America's middle-class families in Congress.

Education is a critical foundation that many Hispanics do not have the opportunity to gain, especially in Higher Education. With the recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in the 114th Congress and the open discussion on the Higher Education Act reauthorization, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus has adopted the following education principles which the Caucus believes are critical to ensuring the advancement of all Latino students in higher education. Similarly, access to higher education and workforce training is critical to establishing America as a competitor in this global economy. A well-trained and educated workforce will benefit all American families.

We respectfully urge you to consider our CHC priorities as you proceed with HEA Reauthorization.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
CHC Education and Labor Task Force

CHC EDUCATION PRIORITIES IN THE 116TH CONGRESS

Reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) to accomplish the following:

College Accessibility:

- Provide access to post-secondary education and open educational benefits, such as federal and state aid to undocumented youth and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients who have graduated from a U.S. high school.
- Increase funding for Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS).
- Encourage better alignment and stronger articulation agreements between community colleges and universities to boost college completion rates.
- Strengthen community colleges and support workforce training programs offered.
- Expand and support Quality Dual Enrollment Programs through the Jumpstart on College Act, which will invest funding to establish and support dual enrollment and early college high schools that primarily serve low-income students.
- Strengthen and increase funding for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and TRIO, High School Equivalency Program (HEP) and College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) programs. Additionally, reform and streamline the Department of Education's (ED) grants appeals process to ensure institutions of higher education and other qualified organizations with long-standing, high-quality programs can appeal ED's decisions with technical assistance and a peer-review process to ensure a continuation of funds that service vulnerable student populations.
- Increase data collection, while safeguarding student's personal information, of student transfers and graduation outcomes by the Department of Education to improve understanding of student completion rates.
- Increase federal support for first year student retention and success programs.

- Increase federal support for K-16 vertical alignment, especially for school districts in lower income and minority majority communities.
- Increase college access and improve college completion for service members and veterans.
- Require institutions to provide students with information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure students have the information they need to access benefits for which they may be eligible.
- Expand eligibility for college students to apply for SNAP by amending the Food and Nutrition Act to include “attending an institution of higher education” as a form of qualification.
- Increase federal support for creation and expansion of programs and outreach that address the need for mental health services and resources among students, particularly students from traditionally underserved populations.
- Ensure all institutions of higher education implement policies and practices that support safe and inclusive campuses for all students regardless of race, national origin, religion, immigration status, gender, and disability.

Teacher Support:

- Recruit more minority teachers through graduate-level financial assistance, including allowing Pell Grants to be used for graduate education and maintaining loan forgiveness for teachers.
- Establish grants to fund development of teacher preparation programs to train teachers on evidence-based English Learners instruction, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and prioritizing current bilingual educational assistants, Bilingual Seal recipients and speakers of indigenous languages.
- Strengthen the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) grants.

- Provide funding to allow teachers and teacher preparation programs to provide ongoing professional development related to culturally and linguistically diverse students tailored to local populations and cultures.

College Affordability:

- Increase mandatory funding of the Federal Pell Grant and maintain year-round availability.
- Increase and strengthen the Federal Work-Study program to ensure that the jobs, including those in community service-learning programs, align with student's academic or career goals.
- Extend Federal Financial Aid eligibility to undocumented and incarcerated students.
- De-mystify and simplify the student aid application process by ensuring Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) interoperability with the IRS data retrieval tool.
- Improve information tools, financial literacy and require the Department of Education to partner with institutions to standardize financial aid award letters and terminology.
- Disaggregate post-secondary data by race, ethnicity, income, and enrollment status.
- Revisit the campus-based aid allocation formula to reflect the distribution of needy students across the country.
- Reduce the student loan debt burden that disproportionately impacts low-income students, first-generation students, women, students of color.
- Strengthen and expand the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program by providing for incremental loan forgiveness for years of service.
- Require the Department of Education to improve performance standards and accountability measures of student loan servicers.

- Codify regulations like the gainful employment rule, the borrower defense repayment rule and the 90/10 rule that increase accountability and provide students with more resources when choosing to attend a specific college or university.
- Provide small-dollar emergency grants for students to help students continue their education rather than dropping out due to financial concerns.
- Increase number of highly qualified Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teachers in under-served Hispanic communities by maintaining incentives like loan forgiveness and allowing Pell Grants to be used for graduate programs.

Oversight of the Higher Education System:

- Strengthen the Department of Education's role in oversight over accrediting agencies and loan servicing agencies.
- Strengthen grant programs that assist institutions of higher education (IHEs) in establishing or developing minority student support centers, specifically for Latino and undocumented students.
- Implement measures to address violence and sexual assault on college campuses.
- Promote applied experiences for students and support experiential learning.

Support of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Diversity in Educational Fields:

- Increase Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) authorization funding levels.
- Increase funding for teacher preparation programs at MSIs.
- Make permanent the HSI STEM Articulation Program under Title III, Part F, which is scheduled to expire at the end of Fiscal Year 2019.

- Support an innovation agenda that works for our communities by structuring federal programs promoting STEM education and innovation in such a way that they focus resources on Hispanic Serving Institutions.
- Increase STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) resources directed to Hispanic communities.

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The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), founded in December 1976, is organized as a Congressional Member organization, governed under the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives. The CHC is dedicated to voicing and advancing, through the legislative process, issues affecting Hispanics in the United States, Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories.