



September 14, 2020

Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
United States Senate  
428 Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray and Senator Jones,

We write to thank each of you for your leadership to advance the simplification of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and to encourage passage of the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2019 this year. We fully agree that it is time to finish fixing the FAFSA.

We represent state and regional higher education leaders, government officials, and agencies in all fifty states. Our members know that filing the FAFSA is the first, but overly complicated step, for students to enroll in colleges and universities. Too many prospective students never make it past this first step.

During the unprecedented COVID-19 emergency students and families are reevaluating their plans to attend college and some are less likely to consider attending. We have already seen dramatic reductions in enrollment and concerning declines in FAFSA completion rates, particularly among students who are underrepresented in higher education. This will exacerbate existing inequalities.

It is urgent to finish fixing the FAFSA through passage of the FAFSA Simplification Act due to four timely issues:

1. The new simple Pell Grant formula will allow for clear communication with students and families about the money available for them to earn a postsecondary credential. In uncertain economic times, people need more certainty when considering college opportunities.
2. States and public institutions will continue to have the information they need to award \$8.2 billion dollars in state-appropriated financial aid and will receive more nuanced information regarding needy students by allowing the formula to show shades of gray with a negative student aid index.
3. Putting off reforms to the FAFSA means that when FUTURE Act implementation occurs the data coming in will not align to the current law's formula, adding new and unnecessary complexity. Students and families will still have to answer financial questions and try to understand their tax filing situation.
4. The flexibility provided to financial aid administrators regarding professional judgement, as well as the new opportunity for students to file for provisional independence, will assist many of the students who struggle the most.

Thank you each for your strong commitment to this issue. It is important to enact this reform this year so our states and regions will be able to set up students and families for success.

Respectfully,

***Robert E. Anderson***

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***Susan G. Heegaard***

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