



October 28, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Education and Labor Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Susan A. Davis
Chairman
Higher Education and Workforce
Investment Subcommittee
1214 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lloyd Smucker
Ranking Member
Higher Education and Workforce
Workforce Investment Subcommittee
127 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Scott and Davis and Ranking Members Foxx and Smucker,

On behalf of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), I write to offer initial feedback in response to the College Affordability Act (H.R. 4674) introduced on October 15, 2019. For over five decades, CGS has served as the national organization dedicated to advancing graduate education and research. Our membership includes nearly 500 institutions of higher education in the United States, Canada, and abroad. Collectively, our members grant 87 percent of all U.S. doctorates and the majority of U.S. master's degrees.

We appreciate the committee's efforts towards a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). CGS has and will continue to weigh in with the broader higher education community on some issues not addressed in this letter. That said, I would like to provide the following reflections on certain select provisions related to graduate education.

Increasing Investments in Graduate Student Financial Aid/Loans

We commend the committee for including a provision that would allow individuals to utilize remaining semesters of Pell Grant support towards a postbaccalaureate degree. The provision states that should an individual remain income-eligible, have had at least one semester of a Pell grant during undergraduate education, but have not exhausted their total Pell support during their undergraduate education, they can access that support during graduate education.

We believe that this would encourage timely completion of undergraduate education as well as help curb the overall amount a student would need to borrow for their graduate education. Most important, this proposal reinforces the mission of the Pell program, which is to provide access to higher education for students who display exceptional financial need. This would also ultimately impact the nation's workforce by expanding the pipeline of diverse individuals with a graduate degree.

H.R. 4674 also restores a modernized version of the Federal Direct Perkins Loan Program for both undergraduate and graduate students, which offers a low-interest option for those demonstrating exceptional financial need. The bill also moves to eliminate origination fees

on federal direct loans and removes interest capitalization, which increase the overall cost burden of these loans to students. Borrowers who receive deferments for graduate fellowships and Fulbright Grants would be protected from interest capitalization.

We also appreciate that the reauthorization of the Federal Work-Study program preserves graduate student participation and that there is interest in expanding work-based learning opportunities so that students can gain insights and experience tied to their area of study.

Additional investments in the Title VI foreign language programs will help promote expertise in language, cultural, and regional education. Graduate and undergraduate language centers and programs would be established, along with the extension of six currently funded programs that assist in post-baccalaureate students and professionals.

These aforementioned provisions reflect a critical need to ensure that a greater number of individuals, including those from diverse backgrounds, matriculate into the U.S. workforce. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs requiring at least a master's degree are and will continue to be most in demand over the next decade.

Offering Fixes to Improve Existing Programs

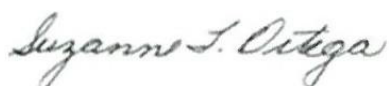
We also believe it is important to improve upon existing programs that impact student borrowing and aid. H.R. 4674 makes several revisions to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program and establishes appeals process applicants who were denied PSLF status. In addition, the bill would revise the TEACH Grants program by preventing inadvertent grant-to-loan conversion, thereby protecting individuals from accruing extra costs.

Improving Diversity, Equity, and Access

We applaud the reauthorization of mandatory funding for STEM programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). The bill would also create grant programs to promote post-baccalaureate opportunities for Hispanic Americans, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islanders, and American Indian and Alaska Native students. An innovation fund would support activities at MSIs to recruit low-income students as well as improve graduation rates and employment outcomes.

CGS remains committed to working with the committee in its efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act— an endeavor that is both timely and necessary. CGS's [Federal Policy Agenda](#) further outlines our HEA priorities. If you have any questions, or if we can be of assistance to you or your staff, please do not hesitate to contact Lauren Inouye, Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs for the Council of Graduate Schools at Linouye@cgs.nche.edu or (202) 461-3864.

Sincerely,



Suzanne T. Ortega
President

CC:

The Honorable Joe Courtney
The Honorable Mark Takano
The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
The Honorable Josh Harder
The Honorable Andy Levin
The Honorable Ilhan Omar
The Honorable David Trone
The Honorable Susie Lee
The Honorable Lori Trahan
The Honorable Joaquin Castro
The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
The Honorable Gregorio Kilili Sablan
The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
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The Honorable Steve Watkins
The Honorable Dan Meuser
The Honorable William Timmons