

February 15, 2018

Rep. Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the undersigned associations representing thousands of colleges and universities and the educators who work at them, we write to express our grave reservations about the version of H.R. 4508, the *Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform Act* (PROSPER), passed in December by the Education and the Workforce Committee. We appreciate the great care and attention that both parties have taken over the last fifty years to improve the affordability and quality of postsecondary education through federal policy. We believe this Congress needs to build on these accomplishments, not undercut them.

The fundamental purpose of any reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is to enhance the ability of students to enter and complete postsecondary education. Every previous reauthorization of the Higher Education Act has strengthened federal support for low- and middle-income students. Sadly, the PROSPER Act moves in the opposite direction. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the PROSPER Act would reduce federal aid to students by nearly \$15 billion. The magnitude of this cut fails to fully identify the harm caused by the changes proposed in this bill. The bill limits the ability of parents and graduate students to borrow through affordable loan programs, a change that would cost the federal government money. This budgetary cost is then paid for by eliminating benefits that help low- and middle-income undergraduate students afford college. This leaves all students far worse off.

What this means to students and families cannot be overstated. The PROSPER Act would undermine the ability of students to afford and attend college by increasing the cost of student loans for over 6 million borrowers, eliminating grants for 1.5 million students, and narrowing loan repayment options. It would reduce the capacity of programs and institutions to serve underrepresented students, especially at community colleges and those campuses that have historically served students of color. It includes several provisions directly harmful to graduate students, reducing or eliminating the few remaining sources of aid available to them. Finally, it will make students more vulnerable to bad actors and poor performing institutions. For these and other reasons, we ask that the bill not be brought to the floor for a vote until substantive changes are made to address these problems.

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Since the bill's introduction on December 1, we have had time to consider its impact and engage in positive conversations with staff on both sides of the aisle who have listened carefully to our concerns. We believe there are worthwhile elements of this legislation. It makes a determined effort to reduce the regulatory burden that drives up costs and causes needless confusion on college campuses. Other proposals, such as a Pell Grant bonus, a simplified financial aid application process, and the elimination of origination fees on student loans enjoy the broad support of the higher education community.

We welcome these provisions and would like to support a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act enthusiastically as it is long past time for Congress to tackle the issues. However, because the bill is so problematic for students and families, particularly in the student financing provisions at the core of the Higher Education Act, we cannot in good conscience support it. Indeed, if the bill is brought to the floor in its current form, we will have to oppose it.

We are anxious to work with you on ways to improve this bill for students and families.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

ACPA—College Student Educators International
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American College Health Association
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of American Law Schools
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

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Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of Independent Colleges
EDUCAUSE
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admissions Counseling
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Collegiate Athletic Association
Phi Beta Kappa Society
The Common Application
UPCEA

Cc: The Honorable Virginia Foxx
The Honorable Bobby Scott