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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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June 27, 2021

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chair, Education & Labor Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleagues,

We write to you regarding potential amendments to the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021 involving expanding access to the Pell Grant program for students enrolled in short-term programs. If an expansion to the Pell Grant program is included in the bill, we urge you to ensure that all higher education institutions are eligible to participate.

Expanding access to the Federal Pell Grant program to include short-term workforce training programs is an extraordinary step in the right direction. The Higher Education Act has long overlooked the value that short-term training programs can provide for students. Not all students want to or can enroll in traditional higher education programs, and Congress should support changes to the Higher Education Act that provide students an opportunity to earn short-term credentials that will help them succeed in the workforce.

Any expansion should include numerous safeguards to ensure that low-performing, short-term programs are excluded, such as linking program eligibility to student outcomes or by requiring states to play a role in the programmatic vetting process. However, recent efforts in the Senate have gone too far and have proposed excluding all proprietary institutions from participating in short-term Pell, including those that out-perform community colleges. We believe Congress should support access to all high-quality programs, including those offered at proprietary institutions.

Proprietary institutions serve nearly two million students in the United States. Many offer programs that local community colleges do not offer conveniently for non-traditional and underserved students. These programs produce graduates who are ready to succeed in high-demand occupations, including essential workers such as nurses and truck drivers.

We ask that any changes made to the bill to expand Pell Grant access to short-term programs allow all high-quality institutions to participate – allowing students the ability to choose which school best fits their needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Al Lawson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "A".

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

/S/Rep. Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/S/Rep. Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/S/Rep. Donald Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

/S/Rep. Darren Soto
Member of Congress

/S/Rep. Yvette D. Clark
Member of Congress

/S/Rep. Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress