
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing on “Barriers to Equal Educational Opportunities: Addressing the Rising Costs of a College Education”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Barriers to Equal Educational Opportunities: Addressing the Rising Costs of a College Education.”*

Good Morning.

Welcome to today’s hearing on “Barriers to Equal Educational Opportunities: Addressing the Rising Costs of a College Education.”

New data just released by the College Board show what is by now an all-too-familiar trend. In the last five years, tuition at four-year public colleges nationwide soared by 31 percent, after inflation. And whether a student attends a public college in-state or out-of-state, a private college, or a two-year college, the bad news is that prices are up across the board.

To help meet these rising costs, students are relying more than ever on both federal and private student loans. Worse yet, each year as many as 200,000 would-be students choose to delay or forego a college education because they simply can’t afford it.

These trends aren’t just troubling for students and families, but also for our country’s future. Now more than ever, the strength of our economy rests on our ability to produce a highly educated workforce.

Business leaders tell us that the most important thing we can do to drive the innovation we need in today’s global economy is to ensure that all students have access to a good education.

One of the key priorities for this Congress has been to make college more affordable and accessible for every qualified student who wants to attend.

Already this year, we took a truly historic step towards this goal by enacting the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. This law does more to help students and families pay for college than any federal effort since the GI Bill of 1944. It provides more than \$20 billion in financial assistance to low- and middle-income students and families over the next five years.

I believe this law will help lead our country in the right direction by expanding college access – and doing so at no new cost to taxpayers.

But there is still work to be done in order to ensure that no student is prevented from going to college because of the price. Increasing financial aid for students addresses one side of families' ledgers; today we will address the other side – cost.

As we move closer to reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, one of our goals will be to develop strategies to help colleges rein in increases in costs.

It is clear that as consumers of higher education, students and families need better information about college pricing, and the reasons behind tuition increases from year to year.

As we examine how best to further address these rising costs, we must learn more about how colleges and universities set their prices and the factors that drive their various cost increases. We also must learn more about how both schools and states spend their higher education dollars and the relationships between college costs and education quality. And we must look at the roles of federal, state, and local governments in helping to keep college affordable.

Today we will hear about these different elements of the college cost equation. We will also learn more about practices that are already being used by some states and colleges to help keep college costs manageable.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for joining us today for this important discussion.

I also want to recognize two members of our committee, our Senior Republican, Mr. McKeon, and one of our senior Democrats, Mr. Tierney, who have put forth interesting proposals to address college costs. Today's hearing will help us build on their efforts.

A college degree continues to be the gateway to joining the middle class. I look forward to continuing the work of this Committee and of this Congress to help ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to go to college.

Thank you.

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