

July 20, 2009

Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 House Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

We are writing to express our strong support for the college completion and retention provisions of H.R. 3221, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009.

For the nation to remain competitive globally, and for all citizens to have the ability to achieve the American dream, our education system will need to produce greater numbers of students who earn postsecondary credentials, especially students from groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education. President Obama has set a goal of the United States leading the world in the percentage of adults with a postsecondary degree by 2020. The completion and retention provisions of H.R. 3221 are exactly what are needed to meet the President's ambitious target.

We congratulate the Committee for investing more than \$3 billion to bolster college access and completion support programs for students, a dollar figure above and beyond even the President's significant proposal. We strongly support the accountability provisions to ensure that grantees produce concrete results and meet clearly defined statewide objectives and goals. We also appreciate the bill's emphasis on collecting progression and completion data that is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and family income. Over time, use of these data will lead to better decision making and cost-effective, sustainable, and replicable solutions to the problem of low college completion rates.

We are also very pleased to see that H.R. 3221 provides for multi-year competitive funding to states and other recipients, and that it requires grantees to develop partnerships that include key stakeholders. We also appreciate the planning process that is provided for in this bill that is designed to make the most effective use of these federal dollars. Taken as a whole, these provisions will ensure that these important investments will incentivize strategies to increase postsecondary attainment that will survive changes in political leadership and will remain in effect after the funding for these grants has expired.

Finally, we would also like to express our appreciation for the fact that the new Perkins Loan Program will award one-quarter of its funding based on completion rates for Pell Grant recipients. We congratulate you for developing this innovative approach to leveraging additional Federal dollars to ensure that more low-income students complete their college educations.



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Please accept our thanks to you and your staff for a job well-done in crafting the college completion portions of this bill. We look forward to supporting you throughout the entire legislative process as we work toward our shared goal of graduating more students from college.

Sincerely,

Gaston Caperton
President, The College Board

Brit Kirwan
Chancellor, University System of Maryland, and
Chair, National Commission on College Access, Admission & Success

Stan Jones
President, National Consortium for College Completion

Paul Lingenfelter
President, State Higher Education Executive Officers

David Longanecker
President, Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education

Larry A. Isaak
President, Midwest Higher Education Compact

cc: Ranking Member John Kline

