



National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

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The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
House Education & Workforce
Committee

Dear Chair Foxx,

The National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs (NASSGAP) thanks you for introducing the Promoting Employment and Lifelong Learning Act (the PELL Act) to enable students – including adult learners – to pursue additional postsecondary paths leading to a degree, certificate or other credential that leads to a high paying job. With over 11 million unfilled jobs in America (per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Job openings and Labor Turnover Summary report), the opportunity to pursue all pathways that lead to 21st century skills that employers need is a crucial benefit to all Americans.

We are also aware of two bipartisan Senate bills that would pursue similar goals, the Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students Act (the JOBS Act) and the American Apprenticeship Act. We encourage you to work with these Senators to find the right combination of “guardrails” and student counseling and incentives to ensure enactment of a bill to help fill these 11 million jobs before they potentially move elsewhere. As you have noted, the perfect should not be the enemy of the good in achieving our workforce goals.

While NASSGAP's Executive Committee traditionally requires a unanimous vote to support legislation, and we are unanimous in supporting expanding aid to shorter-term programs that will help our states' employers fill their vacant jobs, we have various views on the right guardrails. We recognize that there are many experts on this issue in both the House and Senate, so we will share some suggestions and views held by some of our members:

- Using the three-year payback period approach to outcomes in the PELL Act seems like a reasonable approach; we are curious if data is already available to support program eligibility.
- Enabling two-year public institution programs to participate likely ensures an in-state student could complete such a program without incurring (significant) student loan debt.



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- Addressing concerns as to whether Pell will be funded at a level sufficient to cover both the currently eligible programs and the growth in short-term programs that would be expected with this expansion in eligibility will enhance bipartisan support.
- Allowing states to approve short-term programs for participation could ensure better oversight and better alignment with workforce needs in the state or region.
- Creating an “E-Z” or express FAFSA for these short-term programs might expedite participation.

We look forward to working with you on this initiative.

Sincerely,

Irala Magee
NASSGAP President