AccessLex Institute Statement on Senate Higher Education Act Reauthorization Legislation

WEST CHESTER, PA, September 27, 2019 — AccessLex Institute is concerned about the approach to Higher Education Act reauthorization taken by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee with the introduction of the Student Aid Improvement Act. The Higher Education Act is a complex law that governs a multifaceted higher education system. Taking a piecemeal approach that does not address inter-related policy issues and programs simultaneously leaves many existing problems unaddressed and will undoubtedly lead to unintended consequences.

AccessLex is heartened to see that this bill would simplify the FAFSA process for students and families. The existing application and process can create unnecessary barriers for prospective students, particularly low-income students, seeking to advance their education. Removing these barriers without sacrificing the data and information that the federal government and institutions require to assess financial need is critical to ensuring that students can afford higher education.

Despite support for some elements of the bill, however, we do not believe that including only a small number of issues in a reauthorization bill will effectively address the changing landscape of higher education that has developed since the last reauthorization over a decade ago.

AccessLex Institute urges the HELP Committee to continue its bipartisan negotiations to better ensure access to higher education, particularly for historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students, and to better support affordability for graduate and professional students through a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

See our full set of Higher Education Act policy recommendations here.

About AccessLex Institute:
AccessLex Institute is a nonprofit organization committed to helping talented, purpose-driven students find their path from aspiring lawyer to fulfilled professional. In partnership with its nearly 200 ABA-approved Member law schools, improving access and positively influencing legal education have been at the heart of the Company’s mission since 1983. The AccessLex Center for Legal Education Excellence® advocates for policies that make legal education work better for students and society alike and conducts research on the most critical issues facing legal education today. The AccessLex Center for Education and Financial Capability® offers on-campus and online financial education programming and resources to help students confidently manage their finances on their way to achieving personal and professional success. AccessLex Institute has offices in West Chester, PA, and Washington, D.C., with a team of accredited financial education counselors based throughout the United States. Learn more at AccessLex.org.