



## AccessLex Institute Supports the *College Affordability Act's* Proposals to Improve Access to Higher Education

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 16, 2019 — AccessLex Institute is pleased to offer our support for the *College Affordability Act*, which we believe would further the fundamental goals of the Higher Education Act (HEA) to increase access and affordability of higher education.

The *College Affordability Act* overturns the student unit record ban that has prohibited the collection of student-level data since 2008. This proposal indicates that Congress appreciates the importance of providing students and families with information that is crucial to making higher education-related decisions, and AccessLex supports its inclusion.

We also support the proposal to allow students to exhaust their full Pell Grant eligibility on graduate studies. Given the mounting costs associated with graduate and professional degrees, it is critical that Congress take steps to advance policies that lower the cost of graduate education for students who are least able to afford it.

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program encourages individuals to pursue and persist in public service careers that benefit communities across this country. However, despite the benefits, issues with implementation have shown that there is room for improvement. We are pleased to see that maintaining and strengthening PSLF is a vital component of this bill. For example, it allows individuals who were in the wrong repayment plan to count their payments toward loan forgiveness and it allows borrowers to consolidate their loans without losing credit toward loan forgiveness. These proposed changes would go a long way in ensuring that the federal government provides the student loan forgiveness that Congress intended over a decade ago in recognition of the tremendous benefits that public servants provide.

Additionally, we believe that borrowers need to be fully aware of the implications of borrowing, and students, especially graduate and professional students, should be given all the information they need to make well-informed decisions. As such, we applaud the *College Affordability Act's* inclusion of provisions that would increase and enhance student loan counseling.

Finally, this bill seeks to simplify the federal student loan system by replacing the existing repayment plans with a single fixed repayment plan and one income-based repayment

plan. Specifically, the bill would allow borrowers earning below 250 percent of the federal poverty line to repay at \$0 per month. It would also forgive any remaining debt balance after 20 years of repayment for undergraduate and graduate borrowers. These proposed changes would provide much needed support to low-income borrowers, as well as graduate and professional borrowers who are often overlooked or penalized in the federal student loan reform discussion.

Developing a comprehensive, bipartisan HEA proposal is critical to addressing the needs of today's students as they navigate the rapidly changing higher education system. AccessLex Institute urges both the House and Senate to continue its work to improve access and affordability for graduate and professional students, particularly historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students, through a comprehensive reauthorization of HEA.

See our full set of Higher Education Act policy recommendations [here](#).

See our proposed guiding principles for Higher Education Act reauthorization [here](#).

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