



September 10, 2024

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As the House Committee on Appropriations prepares its Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 spending bills, AccessLex Institute® urges an increase in funding for Title III of the Higher Education Act (HEA), which provides funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions. AccessLex also urges the House Committee on Appropriations to provide increased funding for Student Aid Administration, which will allow the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) to better serve students and borrowers; and for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which provides child care for low-income parents pursuing a postsecondary education.

AccessLex Institute, in partnership with its nearly 200 nonprofit and state-affiliated ABA-approved member law schools, has been committed to improving access to legal education and to maximizing the affordability and value of a law degree 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.

Invest in Historically Black Colleges and Universities

HEA Title III authorizes critical programs such as the Strengthening HBCUs program and the Historically Black Graduate Institutions (HBGIs) program, which awards grants to eligible institutions to assist them in strengthening their academic, administrative, and fiscal capabilities. As part of President Biden's FY25 budget proposal, the Biden-Harris Administration requests \$855.1 million in Title III funding, \$108.5 million of which will go to fund HBGIs in order to support the graduate educational opportunities of Black students. It is well documented that these institutions play an outsized role in educating Black students – they represent three percent of all colleges and universities but enroll 10% of Black undergraduates, and their graduates make up approximately 80% of Black judges and 50% of Black

lawyers. Still, funding and resources continue to lag behind those that serve predominately White students.

Beyond the objective value to individuals, and society as a whole, of increasing the ranks of Black graduate and professional degree holders, research shows that Black bachelor's degree holders earn 20% less than their White counterparts, practically necessitating that Black students earn a graduate degree to help close the pay gap. Increasing funding for HBGIs would materially help on this front. That is why AccessLex continues to call for increased funding of these institutions and urges the House Committee on Appropriations to authorize funding levels that are consistent with the President's request. The federal investment in these institutions must reflect the need that exists if Congress is to keep the promise it made with the passage of the Higher Education Act in 1965: to provide educational opportunity to all Americans who wish to pursue it.

Increase Funding for Loan Servicing and FAFSA Implementation

The President's FY25 budget proposal also requested \$2.7 billion for Student Aid Administration for continued implementation of return to repayment and other loan servicing activities, streamlining FSA customer interactions, and data management of programs like Public Service Loan Forgiveness and income-driven repayment. The requested funds would also go towards continued implementation of the *Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act* and the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act*, which the Education Department has been struggling to implement, causing serious delays with the rollout of the FAFSA form.

We urge the House Committee on Appropriations to increase funding for Student Aid Administration because creating an effective and efficient financial aid system that supports student loan borrowers is a critical component of providing access. Further, funding that adequately supports loan servicing activities is essential to ensure borrowers receive timely and accurate support, helping them navigate complex repayment options and significantly improving borrower experience. Also, it is imperative that FSA receives all the resources it needs to prevent the FAFSA delays it has recently been plagued with. Ensuring that borrowers have a financial aid process that is centralized and streamlined, support through repayment, and loan servicing that is improved and modernized would go a long way in easing the confusion that families and students face when navigating the financial aid and repayment processes. Finally, this legislative language should specify that the increase in funding should be used to improve loan servicing for borrowers and FAFSA implementation, so that the money cannot be diverted to other activities within the Student Aid Administration account.

Support Student-Parents

Underscoring the importance of child care, the budget proposal requested \$80 million in funding for the CCAMPIS program, which helps low-income student-parents by providing them with affordable campus-based child care services. This cohort often faces unique obstacles stemming from the lack of access to and cost of child care, severely impacting their ability to complete their degrees. With the average annual cost of child care rising from \$10,600 in 2021 to \$11,582 in 2023, ensuring that CCAMPIS funding is prioritized will provide low-income student-parents with the resources they need to complete their

degree. This investment will also promote educational equity and support a diverse student population, ultimately contributing to a more skilled and educated workforce.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at cchapman@accesslex.org or Nancy Conneely, Managing Director of Policy, at nconneely@accesslex.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris S", written in a cursive style.

Christopher P. Chapman
President and Chief Executive Officer