



November 4, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

AccessLex Institute® is pleased to offer its support for S. 5091, the *Basic Assistance for Students in College (BASIC) Act*. Introduced on September 18, 2024 by Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), the *BASIC Act* would establish a grant program to help institutions of higher education identify and meet the basic needs of students, including helping them to access food, housing, healthcare, and child care.

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.

According to a recommendation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, families should not spend more than seven percent of their income on child care costs. However, the average single parent spends nearly 37% of their household income on child care for one child and married couples pay almost 11%. What's worse is that the cost of child care has increased 25% in the past decade, with infant care costs now exceeding the average cost of in-state tuition at public four-year colleges in 29 states and the District of Columbia.

For low-income student-parents, this high cost can force them to choose between attending classes or watching their children, which can lead to higher dropout rates and perpetuate the cycle of poverty. AccessLex supports the *BASIC Act*, because it would allow institutions to use grant funds to support eligible students by providing them with greater access to child care services including priority access to

on-campus facilities. Affordable child care is essential for low-income student-parents as it directly impacts their ability to pursue higher education and improve their economic prospects. By ensuring that low-income student-parents have access to affordable child care, we can not only support their educational and career aspirations but also invest in the future success of their families and communities.

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