



March 19, 2025

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chairman
House Education and Workforce Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member
House Education and Workforce Committee
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Walberg and Ranking Member Scott:

AccessLex Institute® is deeply concerned with H.R.1739, the *Higher Education Reform and Opportunity (HERO) Act*, which would decrease the amount of federal loans that graduate and professional students may borrow and eliminate income-driven repayment (IDR) programs. Introduced on February 27, 2025 by Representative Chip Roy (R-TX), the *HERO Act* would make it difficult for many to afford their education while also making repayment less affordable for student loan borrowers.

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.

Graduate Borrowing

Federal graduate lending provides a critical financing option for students who are interested in obtaining an advanced degree, which many professions require, regardless of background or station. Limiting graduate funding to \$18,500 annually and \$74,000 in the aggregate as the *HERO Act* proposes will effectively force students to seek supplemental financing from private sector lenders to pay for their degree. Relying on private lenders, which have differing incentives, underwriting limitations, and profit goals than the federal government, would mean returning to an environment where many low- and middle-income students will be unable to obtain a student loan under reasonable terms, or even obtain a loan at all.

Additionally, the proposed caps do not seem to consider the difference in cost between graduate and professional programs, some of which cost substantially more than both the annual and aggregate loan limits. For example, there is not a single law program in the United States whose annual cost of attendance meets the \$18,500 cutoff. This means that students in these programs would be locked out of receiving a federal loan covering the cost of their program, limiting access to this profession for many low- and middle-income students who are unable to secure a private loan. The loan limits also fail to consider issues like inflation and the rising cost of college. Rather than a static figure, we continue to advocate that any loan limits should be indexed in some way to reflect increases in tuition, cost of living, and inflation.

Repayment

Next, the *HERO Act* seeks to eliminate all IDR plans, leaving borrowers with no affordable means to repay their loans. While we have supported reducing the number of IDR plans from five to one, complete elimination of them would be bad policy. These plans were created to make student loan repayment more affordable for borrowers who struggle to manage high loan payments relative to their earnings by basing their monthly payments on their income. Without an affordable IDR plan, the 13 million borrowers currently enrolled would be unable to afford their monthly payments, with many falling into default.

Preserving current federal graduate lending levels and ensuring that borrowers have access to an affordable IDR plan will help ensure that higher education remains a viable option for all students. AccessLex Institute urges you to protect these programs so that students can access higher education, fill much needed jobs, and repay their debts.

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,



Christopher P. Chapman
President and Chief Executive Officer