



March 19, 2025

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

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

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

AccessLex Institute® is deeply concerned with S. 308, the *Graduate Opportunity and Affordable Loans (GOAL) Act*, which would (1.) eliminate the Grad PLUS Loan Program; (2.) cap the annual student loan limit a professional student can borrow at \$40,500, and (3.) cap the aggregate student loan limit a professional student can borrow at \$130,000. Introduced on January 29, 2025 by Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL), the *GOAL Act* cuts against the very heart of the *Higher Education Act* by serving to reduce access rather than to expand it, particularly for low- and middle-income students.

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.

It has always been our position that eliminating the Grad PLUS Loan Program is bad policy. 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. Eliminating Grad PLUS Loans and limiting graduate borrowing would 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.

We appreciate that the *GOAL Act* takes into account the different costs associated with professional degree programs and would provide these students with loan limits that are separate

from other graduate students. We also appreciate that the aggregate loan limit of \$130,000 for professional students reflects the higher costs and longer duration of many professional degree programs. However, there are a number of professional programs that cost more than both the annual and aggregate loan limits of \$40,500 and \$130,000. This means that students in these programs would eventually have to take out private loans to finance a portion of their education. 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.

Preserving current federal graduate lending will help ensure that higher education remains a viable option for all students. AccessLex Institute urges you to protect the Grad PLUS Loan Program so that students can access higher education and fill much needed jobs.

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](mailto:cchapman@accesslex.org) or Nancy Conneely, Managing Director of Policy, at [nconneely@accesslex.org](mailto: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