



May 8, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Collins and Vice Chairwoman Murray:

As the Senate Committee on Appropriations prepares its Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 spending bills, AccessLex Institute® urges you to increase 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 asks the Committee to provide increased funding for Student Aid Administration, which will allow the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) to better serve students and borrowers. Finally, we ask that you increase funding 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 award grants to eligible institutions to assist them in strengthening their academic, administrative, and fiscal capabilities. As part of President Trump's FY26 budget proposal, the Administration requested a \$112 million *reduction* in funding for the Strengthening Institutions program, which is part of Title III. It is well documented that HBCUs 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 for these institutions. The federal investment in HBCUs and other minority-serving 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 FY26 budget proposal also requested a \$127 million *reduction* for the Education Department's (ED) program administration efforts. The Administration's rationale for this cut is that ED has reduced its workforce and is winding down operations as part of the President's executive order to close the agency. However, ED continues to implement return to repayment and other loan servicing activities, streamline FSA customer interactions, and manage the data of programs like Public Service Loan Forgiveness and income-driven repayment.

We urge the Committee 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. 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 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) delays that we have seen in recent years. Ensuring that students have support related to borrowing and repayment would go a long way in easing the confusion that they often 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

The President's budget proposal also requested a \$75 million *reduction* 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 \$11,582 in 2023 to \$13,128 in 2024, increasing CCAMPIS funding 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, Vice President of Policy, at nconneely@accesslex.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris S", written on a light gray background.

Christopher P. Chapman
President and Chief Executive Officer
AccessLex Institute®