



FACT SHEET

EDUCATION & THE WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

The Improving Postsecondary Education Data for Students Act

THE PROBLEM:

In recent years, the federal government has taken steps to improve data collection and transparency in the higher education system. Under Republican leadership, the 2008 reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act* included several provisions to provide students and families with the data needed to make informed decisions about their postsecondary opportunities.

Despite these improvements, however, students and families still struggle to access and understand the data they need to choose the right higher education institution. Additionally, data collection is a time-consuming endeavor that leads to higher costs for many institutions. During the 2012-13 academic year, institutions spent an estimated 850,320 hours and almost \$31 million to fill out required federal surveys. This is on top of the time and money spent complying with reporting requirements from states and regional, national, or programmatic accrediting agencies.

THE SOLUTION:

As Congress begins to examine policies and proposals to strengthen the *Higher Education Act*, members must first understand whether the existing transparency measures are working for students, families, and higher education institutions. To help shine a spotlight on the challenges and opportunities in higher education transparency, Rep. Luke Messer (R-IN) introduced the *Improving Postsecondary Education Data for Students Act* (H.R.1949). This responsible proposal would direct the Department of Education to convene an Advisory Committee on Improving Postsecondary Education Data to conduct a study on the factors students and families have, want, and need when researching their postsecondary education options.

THE IMPROVING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION DATA FOR STUDENTS ACT:

- Requires the advisory committee to review existing federal, state, institutional, and private-sector transparency initiatives to determine the information that is most helpful to both traditional and non-traditional students, including student veterans.
- Directs the advisory committee to explore whether information about college graduates' earnings would serve as an effective measure of program quality for prospective students.
- Instructs the advisory committee to solicit feedback from students and families as part of its study. The committee must issue its recommendations within a year of enactment to assist congressional efforts to reauthorize the *Higher Education Act*.

The *Improving Postsecondary Education Data for Students Act* will take an important step toward strengthening higher education transparency and ensuring all students have access to the data they need to choose the right college.