



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Statement on the Republican Substitute
Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor
Markup of H.R. 4674, *College Affordability Act*
October 29, 2019**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Our nation’s postsecondary education system is in desperate need of comprehensive reform. Congress can no longer rubber stamp a law first created over 50 years ago. Unfortunately, the legislation we are considering today, the so-called *College Affordability Act*, puts politics and special interests above bipartisan solutions. Democrats have missed an opportunity to work with Committee Republicans in a bipartisan manner to address the challenges students face.

Students and families can no longer afford the status quo. The same tired idea of throwing more money into the existing system and hoping that this time things will be different is the very definition of insanity. Government overreach and unnecessary intervention has contributed to a bloated postsecondary education sector at the expense of students. My Democrat friends across the aisle seem to have missed this lesson and instead double down on this failing notion. A representative of the higher education sector has weighed in and said that the so-called *College Affordability Act* will ‘increase the cost of doing business for most institutions.’ Republicans know – and Democrats should know – that this cost won’t be borne by schools, but like any other business will instead get passed to consumers in the form of higher tuition and fees. We can do better.

The Republican substitute, known as *High-Quality Opportunities in Postsecondary Education (HOPE) Act*, includes four major reforms to reduce costs and increase college affordability for students. Specifically, the proposal emphasizes the importance of completion, simplifies and improves student aid, provides

transparency in price and outcomes, and gets the federal government out of the way.

The *HOPE Act* makes college more affordable by implementing many of the recommendations from the colleges' own Task Force on Federal Regulation of Higher Education, which include repealing or streamlining dozens of unnecessary reporting requirements and striking many burdensome and overreaching regulations.

The higher education landscape is famously resistant to change and innovation. Despite the proliferation of creative learning models and dramatically changing demographics of the student population, most colleges and universities continue to use the same worn tactics to instruct students. Institutional rigidity and outdated federal rules have stifled new deliveries of education and empowered entrenched stakeholders' interests over students' interests and needs. Institutions must innovate to meet the needs of contemporary students, and the federal government must remove roadblocks to student success.

The *HOPE Act* lowers the cost of college for students so they can complete an affordable program that prepare them for the workforce with the skills they need for lifelong success. With a growing skills gap in our country, this is more important than ever.

While the U.S. is currently experiencing an economic boom – boasting the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years – the American workforce faces a shortage of seven million skilled workers, illustrating the disconnect between the business community and college campuses. Students go to school to get a rewarding job, but they are leaving disenchanted with their experience. On average, 43 percent of college graduates are underemployed in their first job. Students are not the only ones who recognize the current college experience is not working. Fewer than two in five managers believe college graduates are well-equipped for a job in their field of study. The *HOPE Act* offers real solutions to address the skills gap by making substantial reforms to equip institutions with the tools they need to help prepare students for successful careers and fulfill our 21st century workforce needs.

Too many *Higher Education Act* reauthorizations have layered well-intentioned but impractical policies on top of old policies. Committee Republicans believe the next reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act* needs to adopt a different and bold strategy. The *HOPE Act* goes in a new, bipartisan, and collaborative direction. It is a proposal that incorporates Republican and Democrat ideas that will expand student access to higher education; improve student aid; and encourage institutions to serve students better.

We've seen what this Committee can accomplish when we work together in a bipartisan manner. If we truly want to do what is best for American students and families, I encourage my colleagues to vote down the Democrats' partisan bill and work with us to improve and further our efforts to help students achieve their goals."

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