

Federal Policy and Advocacy Update

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

House Republicans and Democrats have announced the members who will serve on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce led by Rep. Dr. Virginia Foxx (R-NC). Among the 23 Republicans, 14 are returning after serving in the previous Congress. Notable Democrats serving on the Committee include Ranking Member Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), the Committee's previous chair, and Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT), who will serve as the Vice Ranking Member.

The various subcommittees for the House Committee on Education and the Workforce have also been announced, including the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development. The Subcommittee will consist of 13 Republicans led by Chairman Burgess Owen (R-UT) and 11 Democrats, including Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA) and Ranking Member Frederica Wilson (D-FL).

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) has announced the Senate Democrats serving on committees. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, which includes 11 Democrats and 10 Republicans, will comprise of one new member, Senator Edward Markey (D-MA), and a new chair, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT). Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) is the Ranking Republican Member of the HELP Committee.

On January 31st, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce announced its oversight plan. The plan states the Committee will place its focus on certain areas involving higher education, including student loan deferment, forgiveness, the public service loan forgiveness program, and proposed changes to the income-driven repayment plan. The oversight plan will also focus on the timely implementation of the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act (FUTURE) Act and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act; use of COVID relief funds; implementation of Title IX; and preserving the First Amendment on campuses.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On January 25th, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce introduced House Resolution (H.R.) 496, which seeks to create a Workforce Pell Grant by amending the Higher Education Act of 1965 to extend Federal Pell Grant eligibility to certain short-term workforce programs. The Senate, for its part, introduced separate Workforce Pell Grant bipartisan legislation, entitled the Jumpstarting Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act, brought by Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Mike Braun (R-IN). Each bill offers differing eligibility requirements for programs; however, both bills require a program to include at least 150 hours of instruction time and be offered for at least eight weeks.

ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

On January 19th, the United States Department of Education (USED) announced 38 award grants totaling more than \$30 million to colleges and universities from five competitive grant programs of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE).

This fund aims to improve higher education opportunities and outcomes for students from underrepresented communities.

The USED also announced \$35 million in grants on the same day under two programs, the Promise Neighborhoods program and the Project Prevent program. Institutions of higher education, K-12 school systems, and community-based organizations are recipients of the awards, including two California grantees: California State University East Bay and the El Rancho School District. Promise Neighborhood grants help communities provide coordinated support services to students from low-income backgrounds. Extension and new grants totaling \$27 million will go toward high-quality early childhood education projects; high-quality, in-school and out-of-school time opportunities; and support for student transitions along their academic careers. Project Prevent provides grants to local educational agencies impacted by community violence, and awards totaling \$8 million were granted to 11 school systems across nine states.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced on January 20th that it will issue \$5.5 million in grants to Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) to establish Centers of Excellence to conduct housing and community development research. This funding opportunity will help strengthen capacity and invest in innovative and actionable research to address issues regarding housing, economic development, and the built environment for underserved communities, according to HUD.

On February 1st, USED released data showing the effect of pandemic legislation, including the American Rescue Plan and the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), on higher education learners. The data showed an estimated 18 million students received direct financial aid under HEERF since the beginning of 2021. Nearly 6 million community college students received direct financial aid from the legislation, along with more than 450,000 students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, more than 24,000 students at Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, and nearly 8 million students at Minority Serving Institutions, which includes HSIs.

According to USED, the new data shows that these funds helped millions of students remain in school, kept costs down so students could stay enrolled, and helped keep faculty and staff employed. USED also released a report that showed 12.7 million students received direct financial aid grants from HEERF funds in 2021 alone. According to the report, 94% of community colleges said HEERF allowed them to keep students enrolled who were at risk of dropping out by providing financial support in 2021.

On February 28th, the Supreme Court will hear arguments on two lawsuits filed against the Biden Administration over its promise to relieve up to \$20,000 of student loans for eligible individuals. An injunction blocking the debt relief plan from going forward will remain in effect until the Supreme Court decides on the lawfulness of the Administration's plan. A third lawsuit, initially brought forth by Arizona's former Attorney General, was dropped by the state's new Attorney General.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENT 2023

In early February, the Chancellor's Office and Board of Governors leadership will meet with Members of Congress to elevate the California Community Colleges federal policy priorities. These advocacy meetings will coincide with the National Legislative Summit

(NLS) in Washington, DC and done in partnership with the Foundation for California Community Colleges and the Community College League of California. We will also be joined by faculty, students, and administrators. Our delegation will advocate for the strengthening of federal financial aid programs, expanding protections for undocumented students, and increasing funding for federal workforce programs, among other priorities.