



September 20, 2019

The Honorable Brett Guthrie  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2434 Rayburn H.O.B. | Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Guthrie:

The Kentucky Association of Career Colleges and Schools appreciates the opportunity for our board member Tom Cropper, our executive director Anthony Bieda, and our government affairs liaison Greg Brotzge, to participate in the higher education forum you hosted at Centre College. The workforce and employers in Kentucky's 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District are well served by your advocacy on their behalf as a member of the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee. As a community of private providers of work-ready education, KACCS respects your diligence and applauds your continuing outreach efforts. Your briefing on the Higher Education Act reauthorization, as well as the ensuing dialogue, afforded our sector direct access to timely, reliable information. It was also important to have a place at the table with other higher education leaders from Owensboro, Bowling Green and Danville. We thank you for these efforts.

KACCS is writing today to reinforce key principles and considerations that we believe should guide the legislation as it is finalized in committee and before it comes to the floor of the House of Representatives:

1. We believe strongly that a **level playing field** must be established and preserved for all education providers regardless of their tax status. Certain institutional and program-level performance metrics under consideration would further constrict the ability of proprietary colleges and schools to meet the education and job-training needs of a vastly underserved population. Notwithstanding the serious flaws inherent in many of those metrics as indicators of institutional quality and integrity, their application, if adopted, must be to all institutions in all sectors, private, public, for-profit and not-for-profit. Policy to the contrary would impede rather than promote capacity development through private investment in career education. Its impetus is derived from belligerence, not fidelity to fairness or promotion of common good.

2. **Protect** the ability for **veterans and service members** to use their earned benefits at the college or school of their choice. We will continue to seek your support in fighting against legislation that proposes to change the 90/10 rule to include GI Bill benefits and military tuition assistance, or to reduce the 90/10 rule to 85/15 or 80/20.
3. Preserve and **expand student aid** for quality and effective career education programs as short as eight weeks in length, to promote more agile training sector responses to current and emerging workforce shortages in key industries. Again, eligibility should extend to proprietary colleges and schools as well as those of different tax statuses. KACCS endorses Sen. Braun's Pell Flexibility Act (Senate Bill S. 1072) on that basis.
4. Acknowledge and **consider** the **demographic and socio-economic** variables that apply to any repayment rate proposal. A one-size-fits-all model does not work for our system of higher education and would penalize institutions that serve the most vulnerable populations. Instead, it is critical that any legislation adjusts for student characteristics. Research finds that a multi-threshold repayment rate system is appropriate and fair. (<https://cecu.informz.net/cecu/data/images/Assessing%20the%20Impact%20of%20Repayment%20Rates%20Final.pdf>)
5. Promote and further **refine data-based, verifiable and independent** program-level performance disclosures for consumers in alignment with accountability and transparency outcomes. Measuring the effectiveness of higher education programs through methods that are sound, replicable and performance-focused is an evolving art that frequently lacks precision, evidentiary support or scientific merit. Basing funding and compliance decisions on those kinds of metrics unintentionally awards bad actors and may in fact punish sound institutions serving more diverse but academically challenged populations. Congress needs to carefully and exhaustively consider which students and how many will be displaced from any post-secondary experience when these flawed metrics assume the force of federal regulations.
6. Enact **comprehensive, full-picture legislation** that respects the interwoven and intricate relationships between all of the components of the nation's strong, sophisticated system of public and private higher education. The temptation to pass piece-meal proposals that assume institutional operations occur in a vacuum must be avoided if the U.S. is to achieve significant gains from new federal policy applied to post-secondary education.

In conclusion, the reauthorization of the Higher Education Acts is an occasion to more fully leverage the agility, creativity and innovation of proprietary schools and private investment to expand, enhance and promote services to underserved populations, including ethnic minorities, rural communities, single working parents and of course, members of the armed services. That outcome honors KACCS Colleges and Schools operating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District as

well as other KACCS schools with campuses and programs serving more than 30 communities across urban, suburban and rural Kentucky.

Regards,

*Chris Ernst*

Chris Ernst, President

cc: Ms. Katherine Fleming, Legislative Assistant