
June 18, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

Thank you for prioritizing reauthorization of the Higher Education Act this Congress. Postsecondary education and training are more important than ever in today's economy, but the nation's higher education system has not kept up with changing demands. As a result, graduates struggle to find good jobs, millions of adults bear the lingering costs of unfinished degrees, and employers can't find enough skilled workers. Western Governors are hopeful that Congress will thoughtfully update federal higher education programs to better serve students and develop the talent that businesses demand.

To be relevant to a quickly evolving economy, workforce training and education opportunities must be accessible and flexible. Almost 80 percent of jobs in the United States require more than a high school degree, but there are many pathways students may take to obtain a postsecondary credential. Western Governors encourage Congress to expand eligibility under the Pell Grant program to include high-quality, short-term training programs leading to industry-recognized credentials. To ensure that this policy succeeds in equipping workers for high-opportunity jobs and careers, Congress should also require reporting of outcomes metrics tied to employment and earnings for these programs. Western Governors support [S. 839](#), the Jumpstarting Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act, for extending Pell Grant eligibility while ensuring quality and alignment with industry demand. We also urge you to do everything possible to increase the funding of the Pell grants program so it can continue to serve as our nation's most vital support for economic mobility of those who are most challenged to participate in higher education.

It is also essential that students be provided with the information needed to make a sound investment in a postsecondary education or training program. This should include completion rates and subsequent employment and earnings data for students at the program and institution level. Western Governors encourage Congress to include [S. 800](#), the College Transparency Act, in reauthorization of the Higher Education Act to collect this vital information in a manner that protects student privacy and ensures data security.

Western Governors are focused on improving talent pipelines for westerners to get the education they need to succeed in our growing economies. We encourage you to examine the *Western Governors' Workforce Development Initiative* [report](#) from 2018 and WGA Policy Resolution [2018-13](#), *Workforce Development in the Western United States*. We look forward to working with you on this important legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



David Ige
Governor of Hawaii
Chair, WGA



Doug Burgum
Governor of North Dakota
Vice Chair, WGA