

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
House Ed. & the Workforce Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member
House Ed. & the Workforce Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate HELP Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate HELP Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Rankers,

We, a group of employers and non-profit stakeholders, write to support the reintroduction and passage of legislation to codify the use of prior-prior year (PPY) tax information and the October 1 start date for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). We also support the restoration of a secure and protected IRS Data Retrieval Tool as soon as possible. Students and families should face as few barriers as possible when filling out the FAFSA to ensure that financial assistance remains accessible to all those seeking higher education.

Each year, millions of students apply for federal student aid by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Completion of the FAFSA is necessary to determine a student's eligibility for federal Pell grants and integral for states and institutions to determine additional financial aid awards. However, due to the complexity of the FAFSA, over 1.4 million high school graduates did not fill out an application in 2014-2015, leaving \$2.7 billion in FAFSA aid left unclaimed.

In response to the high number of unclaimed aid dollars, the executive branch took steps to simplify the FAFSA by moving the start date of the application cycle from January 1 to October 1 of the previous year and by allowing students and families to use tax information from two years prior when filing a FAFSA. Simplifying the form through the use of PPY tax data and ensuring that the IRS Data Retrieval Tool is operating safely and efficiently, combined with extending the filing period, has allowed students and families to use readily available tax information sooner in the process and then have more time to evaluate their higher education options. Despite the executive branch implementing these common-sense fixes last year, they have yet to be codified into law by Congress and the President.

We support codifying these executive branch actions to support millions of students seeking a postsecondary degree and marketable job skills, and urge the Department of Education and the Internal Revenue Service to prioritize correcting the issues with the IRS Data Retrieval Tool as quickly as possible. These steps strengthen our student financial aid system and make it open and accessible to all, which is vital to developing America's workforce for decades to come.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Youth Action
Austin Young Chamber of Commerce (TX)
The Bell Policy Center
The Campaign for College Opportunity
Democrats for Education Reform
The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce (TX)
Higher Ed, Not Debt
Inland Empire Economic Partnership (CA)
Institute for Higher Education Policy
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (CA)
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
National College Access Network
National Skills Coalition
New America Foundation
New Era Colorado Foundation
One Wisconsin Institute
Partnership for College Completion
Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts
Student Debt Crisis
The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)
United Way Worldwide
Young Invincibles