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VAN HOLLEN, SANDERS, PADILLA INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO EXTEND SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Today, U.S. Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) introduced legislation to extend Social Security benefits to age 26 for students who are survivors, children of disabled workers, and eligible grandchildren of retired workers. The Senators' legislation, the Helping Students Successfully Overcome Adversity and Rise (SOAR) with Social Security Act, would restore critical support for families enduring financial struggle and bolster the future success of their children.

“Children who receive Social Security benefits have been dealt challenging hardships – like the loss of a parent – through no fault of their own. These young people face real financial burdens that often require them to work to make up for limited family income, which can cause them to fall behind in school. This legislation will provide the support these students and their families need to overcome barriers to educational success and future economic stability,” **said Senator Van Hollen.**

“With college tuition costs increasing exponentially, we need to do more to support our students and families struggling to pay for postsecondary education,” **said Senator Padilla.** “Social Security children’s benefits are an essential resource to help families make up for lost income. Removing barriers and extending these benefits until age 26 for eligible postsecondary students would improve access to higher education for thousands of young Americans.”

Social Security provides critical benefits to nearly 3 million children ages 19 and younger. For the families of these children, the benefits serve as critical wage replacement when income is lost due to retirement, disability, or death.

After Lyndon B. Johnson expanded the Social Security program in 1965, eligible child Social Security dependents were permitted to continue benefits as qualifying post-secondary students. The program, whose beneficiaries were disproportionately first-generation college students, low-income, or from underrepresented backgrounds, was repealed in 1982 with the Reagan Administration's cuts to Social Security. Studies have shown that the elimination of the program reduced the probability of a student beneficiary attending college by one-third.

Today, with families enduring financial hardship and college enrollment rates still recovering from the pandemic, extending the child benefit for post-secondary students would serve as a lifeline for our nation's most vulnerable families. By amending the Social Security Act to extend eligibility for child's benefits until age 26 for at least half-time post-secondary students who are survivors, children of disabled workers, and eligible grandchildren of retired workers, the Helping Students SOAR with Social Security Act would provide families with crucial support to increase educational opportunity.

Text of the bill is available [here](#).

The Helping Students SOAR with Social Security Act is endorsed by: Blue Future, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Generations United, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), Social Security Works, and Strengthen Social Security Coalition.

“Social Security is our nation's largest children's program. It provides benefits to over 3 million children. Those benefits should continue when these children are in college or other post-secondary education, as they once did. Social Security Works enthusiastically endorses the Helping Students SOAR with Social Security Act, which

restores and expands this crucial benefit, enabling some of our nation's most vulnerable young people to get an education without drowning in debt. All of us owe a huge thanks to Senator Van Hollen for his wise, important legislation,” **said Nancy Altman, President of Social Security Works.**

“For more than 80 years Social Security has been the premier example of an intergenerational policy designed to secure and insure the well-being of individuals and their families, including by providing essential support to spouses and children of people who have died or are disabled. This legislation will ensure that support extends beyond 18 to help students complete or continue their education, lessen the overwhelming burden of student debt, and help young adults become the educated workforce our country needs,” **said Donna Butts, Executive Director of Generations United.**

“NASFAA applauds the introduction of the Helping Students SOAR with Social Security Act, which provides the continuity of Social Security children's benefits for students who have long depended on them during high school by extending that same support through college. The rising costs of a postsecondary education put college dreams out of reach for far too many students. This bill is a common-sense and critical component of helping students realize their postsecondary aspirations,” **said Justin Draeger, President & CEO of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA).**