



June 21, 2016

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), I write to express support for HR 5528, the Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act. NASFAA represents more than 20,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities, and career schools across the country. All told, NASFAA members serve nine out of every ten undergraduates.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) acts as a gateway between needy students and their pursuit of higher education by providing them access to the federal student aid programs. With that important role in mind, financial aid administrators nationwide stand committed to improving both the simplicity and accuracy of the FAFSA for the sake of students and families.

The Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act works to solidify and strengthen previous simplification initiatives. We strongly support several provisions within the bill, including the permanent codification of the use of prior-prior year (PPY) income information on the FAFSA. Ensuring the use of PPY income information in the future is a launching off point toward future simplification efforts that will hopefully be achieved during the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. PPY is the foundational piece of NASFAA's FAFSA simplification recommendations, which consists of a three-tiered application that will make it easier for all students to apply for financial aid while still ensuring that scarce student aid funds continue to go to the neediest students.

The Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act also modifies a small provision in current law that will facilitate the earlier release of final Pell Grant numbers from the Department of Education (ED) in the year, allowing colleges to provide accurate scholarship and grant information much earlier. While these legislative changes may appear minor, they could have a hugely positive impact on students.

The bill also includes additional important efforts in simplification, including making the FAFSA available on mobile devices, requiring regular reports from ED on FAFSA simplification progress, and strengthening and solidifying an additional simplification tool: the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Data Retrieval tool (DRT). Alongside PPY, widespread use of the IRS DRT allows students and families to provide accurate information in a simple way. We encourage the Congress to take whatever steps necessary to ensure total buy-in from the IRS and ED on improving and expanding the use of DRT.

We especially applaud the Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act for requiring diverse consumer testing of the FAFSA, including current and prospective students, families, dependent and independent students, students with and without a zero expected family contribution (EFC), students eligible and ineligible for a simplified needs test, and other individuals with expertise in financial aid. Robust consumer testing provides valuable input to ED from the perspective of those with the most to gain from a streamlined aid application.

We know the Committee is interested in other measures to help students better understand their rights and responsibilities related to how they use their student aid dollars. We are heartened to see that Congress continues to support consumer testing with any new disclosures, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that we not only give students the information they need to make smart college-going and borrowing decisions, but that we also do not overwhelm them with too much information.

The Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act represents a necessary step toward ensuring a streamlined and more accurate federal financial aid application process. We thank you for this bill and encourage immediate adoption of this piece of legislation for the sake of the students and families across America navigating the financial aid process when the FAFSA becomes available on October 1, 2016.

Sincerely,



Justin Draeger,
President and CEO