



December 3, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), I write to encourage you to include bipartisan policies that will improve the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process for millions of postsecondary students in any final fiscal year 2021 spending bill. Improvements have been made to the application since its inception, however more can and should be done to make the form more accessible for students.

While beneficial to all students and families, simplifying the FAFSA would be particularly helpful for low-income students, those who are most likely to feel discouraged by the complexity of the financial aid application process. It is a sad irony that low-income students, who stand to benefit the most from federal student aid, are completing the FAFSA at a rate seven percentage points lower than that of their higher-income peers.¹ The groundwork to simplify the FAFSA and help make up for those discrepancies has already been laid. Proposals from both the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the House Committee on Education & Labor in the 116th Congress — including the bipartisan *FAFSA Simplification Act of 2019* — serve to simplify the FAFSA by making it shorter and easier to complete, and make aid

¹“Students in Higher-Poverty School Districts Are Less Likely to Apply for Financial Aid,” by the National College Attainment Network. (2019, December 02). Retrieved December 03, 2020, from <https://www.ncan.org/news/480053/Students-in-Higher-Poverty-School-Districts-Are-Less-Likely-to-Apply-for-Financial-Aid.htm>

eligibility more predictable for applicants.

The timing for FAFSA simplification could not be more urgent, and the need perhaps never greater amid this global pandemic, with FAFSA completions among high school seniors currently down 15% compared to this time last year.² The 2019 *Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act* (FUTURE) provided a critical first step for FAFSA simplification by permitting the direct data sharing between the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Department of Education (ED), thereby allowing the IRS to automatically populate tax-related information. The FUTURE Act was always intended to be a starting point to FAFSA simplification, to be followed by a more comprehensive bill that would further reduce the number of questions, particularly for our country's neediest students. The time for further action is now, without further delay.

NASFAA supports the much-needed, broader reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and the many important student aid policies that must be addressed in such a bill. However, we recognize that the passage of a narrowly tailored, well-crafted FAFSA simplification bill will deliver improvements to the financial aid application process for students and institutions across the country, during a time when college affordability is more important than ever. We appreciate your consideration of this very important higher education policy issue.

Sincerely,



Justin Draeger, President & CEO

² FAFSA TRACKER. (2020, October 15). Retrieved December 03, 2020, from <https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>