

December 19, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, U.S. Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Doug Jones
U.S. Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Senator Jones:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to thank you for your commitment to improving the federal student aid application process and to respectfully encourage you to consider two specific improvements to the *FAFSA Simplification Act of 2019 (S.2667)* that would further strengthen the bill for the benefit of students and their families.

In addition to reducing the number of questions and greatly simplifying the process of completing and submitting the FAFSA, the bill will reduce the need for the burdensome verification process, which primarily affects low-income students, delaying their aid and enrollment while adding administrative burdens for colleges. We also support the inclusion of provisions that will allow students as young as middle school to easily learn about their likely Pell Grant award and provide these students, early in their academic career, the motivation and support that stems from knowing that a college education is financially possible for them.

However, we are concerned that some populations of students and families may fare worse under this proposal than they do now, including married parents with multiple children.¹ To ensure that all students and families with financial need are well-served under the simplified aid system, we encourage you to make two changes:

- Significantly increase the adjusted gross income thresholds for Pell eligibility from the thresholds currently proposed in the bill. Making this change would ensure low- and moderate-income students have continued access to critical need-based aid.
- Do not double count the income of families who have more than one child in college at the same time. The calculation of a family's ability to contribute to financing their children's education should continue to account for the financial impact of having multiple children simultaneously enrolled in college.

Thank you again for your leadership in improving the financial aid process and for the opportunity to provide our recommendations for strengthening the bill. Please contact Michele Streeter with TICAS (mstreeter@ticas.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

Center for Law & Social Policy (CLASP)
Higher Learning Advocates
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)

¹ According to an analysis of the bill published by the Urban Institute, under the simplified proposal, students without children are four percentage points more likely to receive a Pell Grant, while married students with children are eight percentage points less likely to receive a Pell Grant. <https://urban.is/34e5DQp>