

Alexander Introduces Long-Term Solution to Fund Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Other Minority Serving Institutions

Solution is part of a package of bipartisan proposals including FAFSA simplification, short-term Pell grants, Pell grants for parole-eligible prisoners, and increasing the maximum Pell grant award

WASHINGTON, September 26, 2019 — Senate education committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) today introduced a long-term solution to fund Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority Serving Institutions as part of a legislative package of eight bipartisan higher education proposals drafted by 35 Senators — 20 Democrat, 15 Republican.

“I am today introducing a long-term solution to permanently provide funding for Minority Serving Institutions, including the six HBUCs in Tennessee,” Alexander said. “This solution would be part of a package of eight bipartisan higher education bills drafted by 35 Senators — 20 Democrat, 15 Republican. This package of bills will make it easier for millions of students to get a college education by simplifying the Federal Application for Student Aid, providing Pell grants to parole-eligible prisoners, allowing Pell grants to be used for short-term programs, and increasing the maximum Pell grant award.”

Background on the Simplified Student Aid Act:

1. Permanent mandatory funding, \$255 million each year, for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority Serving Institutions
2. FAFSA simplification — Alexander and Jones
3. Pell grants for prisoners — Schatz, Lee and Durbin
4. Short-Term Pell — Portman, Kaine, Cardin, Gillibrand, Hassan, Klobuchar, Stabenow, Baldwin, Brown, Capito, Coons, Ernst, Jones, Moran, Shaheen, Sinema, Smith, Wicker and Braun
5. Simplify aid letters — Grassley, Smith, Cassidy, Ernst, Hassan, Jones, Klobuchar, Manchin and Rubio
6. The package also increases the maximum Pell grant award
7. To pay for this package, we have a bipartisan proposal that both President Obama and President Trump have supported, which is to ensure that students who opt to pay back their loans under the income driven repayment

plan pay the full 10 percent of their discretionary income as the law intended.

8. A proposal by Senator Murray and me, along with Senators Collins, Cornyn, Gardner, Hassan, King, Stabenow, Tillis and Whitehouse to allow students to answer up to 22 questions on the current FAFSA with one click by using data the government already has from the IRS. This provision is within the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee, and will be included once the package is ready for consideration on the Senate floor.

“There are other bipartisan provisions that I believe should be included in this package. For example, the College Transparency Act, which creates a student unit record system. I am for this bill, and there is substantial bipartisan support for it in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.”

Three additional provisions which have the support of 30 Senators from both sides of the aisle that with a little more discussion and work, should be included in this package at a later date.

1. The College Transparency Act, which creates a Student unit record system to help students and families compare how students performed at specific colleges and universities — Warren, Cassidy, Baldwin, Brown, Casey, Cornyn, Duckworth, Ernst, Gardner, Graham, Grassley, Hassan, Hyde-Smith, Jones, Kaine, Klobuchar, Murphy, Perdue, Roberts, Romney, Scott, Sinema, Smith, Sullivan, Tillis, Toomey, and Whitehouse.
2. The Education of the Deaf Act, which reauthorizes Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. and has a long history of bipartisan support.
3. The Educational Opportunity and Success Act which helps low income, first generation, and other disadvantaged students enroll and succeed in a college or university program — Collins, Baldwin, Capito, Tester.

“For the last five years, Senator Murray and I have been working on a bipartisan reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. We have held 30 hearings on everything from holding colleges accountable to campus safety to simplifying the student aid process. We have yet to reach an agreement on some issues, but on several important issues, these hearings have resulted in a number of bipartisan proposals to make college more affordable and worth students’ time and money. I am committed to continuing to work with Senator Murray to develop a larger, more comprehensive bipartisan bill, but right now, we have an opportunity to enact a package including several of the bipartisan proposals that have come from our process.”

“To continue funding for HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions, the House took a shortcut and rushed a bill to the floor that has serious problems. First, it’s not a bill that can pass the Senate. Second, it only funds HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions for two years—setting up yet another artificial cliff in two years. And finally, it uses a budget gimmick to pay for it. This presents Congress with an opportunity to give certainty to HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions and to make it easier for millions of students to receive a college education.”

Alexander concluded: “Congress has the time to do this. While the legislation expires at the end of September, the U.S. Department of Education has sent a letter assuring Congress that there is enough funding for the program to continue through the next fiscal year. In the meantime, Congress should reach a long-term solution to support these important programs.”

Background:

Click [here](#) for the text of the legislation.

Click [here](#) for Chairman Alexander’s prepared floor remarks on the legislation.