



August 7, 2019

Support the Higher Education Reform and Opportunity Act, H.R. 4098 and S. 2339

On behalf of FreedomWorks' activist community, I urge you to contact your representative and senators and ask them to cosponsor the Higher Education Reform and Opportunity (HERO) Act, H.R. 4098 and S. 2339. Introduced by Rep. Francis Rooney (R-Fla.) and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), the HERO Act would allow states to tailor education to the unique needs of students, by developing their own systems for accrediting educational institutions instead of being restricted fully by the federal Department of Education.

The costs of a traditional four-year education at an accredited institution is rising ever steadily. This places an immense burden on lower and middle-class American families. However, there are currently few alternatives in the federal accreditation system to traditional "brick-and-ivy" institutions for these families. The HERO Act solves this problem and allows states to be more imaginative in creating and supporting alternative academic options for American families.

Additionally, as Rep. Rooney stated, "[E]ducation policy should be dictated at the local and state levels, and not by an out of touch bureaucracy in Washington. Many students have aptitudes and career goals that do not require and are not enhanced by college... Higher education should respond to the needs of our economy and today's job market."

The HERO Act achieves these goals by breaking the long-standing paradigm that the only acceptable educational standard is the four-year bachelor's degree from a highly-ranked institution. At the same time, it also advances the principles of federalism by giving states more power to determine which institutions should be eligible for Title IV student loans for higher education. This would increase the value of a non-traditional educational track, like an online course, an apprenticeship, or a vocational school, that are oftentimes better fits for students than four-year universities.

The United States government was set up as a federalist system in recognition of the fact that interests in one part of the country are vastly different from those in another. Yet, there is currently only one arbiter of educational standards: the federal government. Approximately 40 percent of graduates enter jobs for which they did not need a four-year degree. The national, one-size-fits-all education standard is failing students who would benefit from less costly, less traditional methods.

The bill would not require states to develop their own accreditation system, but would simply allow them to do so if they so choose. Increasing latitude to states to serve their own constituents brings opportunity for increased efficiency and value in education. Additionally, the HERO Act increases transparency by requiring accredited institutions to publish data on the percentage and number of students receiving government loans, as well as the average amount of total federal loan debt.

As Sen. Lee noted, “Today’s students deserve an innovative higher education system that provides more and better options to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of today’s job market. The HERO Act is an important first step toward building that new system.” For these reasons, I urge you to contact your representative and senators and ask them to support the Higher Education Reform and Opportunity Act, H.R. 4098 and S. 2339.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Brandon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks