



H. R. 8618, The College Affordability and Accessibility Act

The College Affordability and Accessibility Act, introduced by Rep. Christian D. Menefee, is designed to make college more accessible by increasing Pell Grants, helping more students qualify, and giving students more time to use that financial aid.

Right now, millions of students rely on Federal Pell Grants to make college possible. The College Affordability and Accessibility Act would strengthen that support by raising the maximum Pell Grant to \$14,800 per year, with future increases tied to inflation so aid keeps pace with the rising cost of living and higher education.

With over 57% coming from families earning \$40,000 or less annually. Most recipients attend 4-year public universities (43.5%) or 2-year public community colleges (24.6%). A significant portion are independent students (48%), first-generation students, and Black and Latino students.

The bill also recognizes that earning a degree is not always a straight path. Currently, students can receive Pell Grants for 12 semesters, or about six years. This legislation would expand eligibility to 16 semesters, or about eight years, giving students more time to complete their education.

That expanded window would especially help students attending school part-time, students who need to pause their education because of work, family, or health challenges, students who change majors, students who simply need more time to graduate.

Put simply, students should not lose financial aid because life got in the way.

The bill also helps students continue their education after earning a bachelor's degree by allowing some to use remaining Pell Grant eligibility toward their first postbaccalaureate career or professional program, including teaching credentials, nursing programs, certification programs, and other workforce training opportunities.

In addition, remedial classes and certain noncredit courses would not count against a student's Pell Grant time limit, ensuring students are not penalized for needing extra academic support along the way.

This legislation would be especially meaningful for low-income students, working students, parents returning to school, first-generation college students, students whose path to graduation takes longer than four years.

At its core, this bill makes Pell Grants larger, extends how long students can receive them, and gives students more flexibility to finish their education and build a better future. College is a challenge, and this bill helps make sure cost is one less of a barrier to opportunity.