

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. _____

Designating November 2021 as “National College Application Month”.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Ms. ERNST, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. CARPER, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on

RESOLUTION

Designating November 2021 as “National College
Application Month”.

Whereas equality of opportunity for all people is one of the noblest aspirations of the United States;

Whereas the United States has created shared economic growth and strengthened civic engagement through making higher education widely available;

Whereas higher education enhances the economic mobility of individual students and their families, which is evidenced by—

(1) a finding by the Brookings Institute that the median lifetime earnings of holders of an associate degree are uniformly greater than the median lifetime earnings of holders of solely a high school diploma;

(2) a finding by the Pew Economic Mobility Project that, for an individual born in the lowest income quintile, obtaining a 4-year degree or a higher degree is associated with—

(A) an approximately 70 percent difference in the probability of that individual earning an income outside the lowest income quintile; and

(B) a threefold difference in the probability of that individual going on to earn an income in the highest income quintile;

(3) the unemployment rate of high school graduates in 2020 who did not immediately matriculate to an institution of higher education the following fall semester was 19.5 percent, which has increased during the COVID–19 pandemic and was almost 3 times higher than the overall unemployment rate of the United States; and

(4) the unemployment rate of adults whose highest credential is a high school diploma is almost double that of those with a bachelor’s degree;

Whereas the National Student Clearinghouse reports that undergraduate enrollment in higher education has declined precipitously since the beginning of the COVID–19 pandemic, particularly for students in poverty and students of color, as evidenced by—

(1) 6.8 percent less high school graduates immediately matriculated to an institution of higher education the following fall semester in 2020, which represents a decline 4.5 times greater than the decline from the prior year;

(2) the decline described in paragraph (1) was most notable among graduates at high poverty high schools, who faced an 11.4 percent decline from 2019 in imme-

diates matriculation to an institution of higher education;
and

(3) the decline described in paragraph (1) also disproportionately affected high school graduates at high minority population schools where college enrollment declined by 9.4 percent from 2019, which represents a decline 10 times greater than the decline from the prior year;

Whereas the complexity of financial aid systems and rising college costs can serve as additional deterrents or barriers for students and families as they assess the viability of higher education programs as a postsecondary option;

Whereas many students and their families struggle to identify and compare postsecondary options due to—

(1) difficulties accessing school counseling services in high school, which is evidenced by an estimation of the American School Counselor Association that the student-to-counselor ratio in the United States is 424 to 1;

(2) an absence of reliable programmatic and institutional outcome data; and

(3) a lack of comparable and understandable college financial aid offers;

Whereas, in addition to expanding outreach and support to recent high school graduates, colleges and universities must also expand outreach and support to adults without a postsecondary degree or credential;

Whereas the most recent data available from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study commissioned by the National Center for Education Statistics found that, of undergraduate students in the United States—

(1) approximately 27 percent are older than 25 years of age;

- (2) 38 percent are enrolled part-time;
- (3) 24 percent are parents; and
- (4) 86 percent live off-campus;

Whereas the National Center for Education Statistics highlights that completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is one of the best predictors of immediate college enrollment, as high school seniors who complete the application are 84 percent more likely to begin post-secondary education in the fall following high school graduation;

Whereas applications for State-based financial aid are available in many States for students who do not qualify for Federal student aid; and

Whereas the ongoing impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on communities, families, and educational systems across the United States underscores and reinforces the value of ensuring that all individuals, including students enrolled in high school and working adults—

- (1) understand their postsecondary options;
- (2) understand college financing opportunities; and
- (3) have support to navigate the college application and financial aid processes: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) designates November 2021 as “National
3 College Application Month”;

4 (2) encourages the people of the United States
5 to—

6 (A) evaluate options for pursuing higher
7 education;

1 (B) submit a Free Application for Federal
2 Student Aid or an appropriate application for
3 State-based financial aid in order to receive col-
4 lege financing opportunities; and

5 (C) support every student, regardless of
6 the background, age, or resources of the stu-
7 dent, in obtaining the skills and knowledge
8 needed to thrive;

9 (3) supports efforts to better assist and in-
10 crease opportunities for low-income, first-generation
11 college students, and students of color, throughout
12 the financial aid process, college application process,
13 and beyond;

14 (4) urges public officials, educators, families,
15 students, and communities in the United States to
16 observe National College Application Month with ap-
17 propriate activities and programs designed to en-
18 courage students and families to consider, research,
19 and apply to college and for financial aid; and

20 (5) commends teachers, school counselors, men-
21 tors, and families who support students throughout
22 the college application process, as well as the organi-
23 zations and institutions partnering to eliminate bar-
24 riers to higher education.