

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

November 8, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

We are writing to express our strong support for creating a Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) reset, which would maximize college students' persistence and success in their postsecondary education by supporting them in maintaining or regaining SAP eligibility under the Higher Education Act (HEA). Doing so would empower so-called "SAP-ed out" students — who lost access to federal student aid due to SAP requirements — to rejoin the higher learning pathway by regaining eligibility for federal student aid.

Michele, a single mom who was already struggling with economic insecurity and time poverty, was studying to become a nurse five years ago when her daughter became ill causing her to miss school. Lacking outside support, Michele fell behind in her studies, resulting in failing grades, and had to drop out to care for her daughter. Although she would now like to return to school and finish her program of study to make a better life for herself and her daughter, she is unable to pay out of pocket for her classes.

Many students like Michele lose eligibility for student financial aid due to their inability to maintain SAP, a requirement in the HEA and further defined by individual institutions of higher education (IHEs) to identify the academic criteria students must meet to remain eligible for federal student aid. To meet SAP requirements, students must meet a minimum grade point average GPA — a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale — and complete a minimum number of courses or credits. About one in 10 college students will have a cumulative GPA less than 2.0.

If a student loses federal financial aid for a failure to maintain SAP, the student may only be able to regain eligibility by improving their grades. Until then, however, the student will be ineligible for federal financial aid — including federal education grants and loans — and will have to self-finance their college costs or use private scholarships or grants.

Thirty-seven percent of students are older than 25, and more than 39 million Americans have some college but no degree. Many of these students dropped or stopped out of school following poor academic performance or not completing enough credits. Oftentimes, one bad semester is enough to ultimately fail SAP. The current policy is leaving too many potential students with an impossible choice — pay for classes out of pocket to improve their academic standing, or stop attending higher education all together.

It doesn't have to be this way. By creating a SAP Reset and reopening the doors to federal financial aid, students like Michele would be able to restart their progress toward completing a

degree or other credential and re-entering the workforce. We urge you to support resetting SAP and additional opportunities to enact reforms that widen the path for today's students.

Sincerely,

Higher Learning Advocates
Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE)
Buckner Children and Family Services
College Unbound
Center for First-generation Student Success
Generation Hope
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)
LeadMn
LIFT
National College Attainment Network
Partners for Rural Impact
Progressive Policy Institute
SchoolHouse Connection
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Student Basic Needs Coalition
The Graduate! Network
The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
The Institute for College Access and Success
Third Way
uAspire
UPCEA
University of California Student Association
Young Invincibles

Individual Signatures

Beth Clemens, Director, Trio Student Support, Ivy Tech Community College
Carrie Black, Coordinator, Trio Student Support, Ivy Tech Community College
Gray Church, Doctoral Candidate, University of Arkansas
Karlee Knuth, Parent Advisor, Ascend at the Aspen Institute
Kristee Johns, Director of Policy and Research, Generation Hope
Tashia Cheves, Coordinator of Student Retention, Spears School of Business