Appendix 1

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McConnell,

As negotiations for a COVID-19 relief stimulus and budget proceed, we are writing today to respectfully request that you include the bi-partisan College Transparency Act (CTA, S.800/H.R.1766) in an end-of-year legislative package. Providing accurate, complete, and customizable information about institutions and their programs for students and families is vital for them to make the best decisions about their education as we fight the current global crisis.

The CTA closes significant gaps in college-level data reporting by establishing a privacy-protected postsecondary data collection system at the National Center for Education Statistics. This data, including student outcomes such as enrollment, completion, and post-college success, will help prospective students determine the programs that best fit their interests and career goals. Unlike the current data collection system, this data would be disaggregated by various factors, including race, ethnicity, and veteran’s status amongst others, and would provide students critical information they need before investing in their future. With the ongoing financial challenges facing many families and the growing student loan crisis, the need for CTA is pressing.

For instance, graduate students are facing an ever-growing mental health crisis. In a survey of roughly 4,000 U.S.-based STEM Ph.D. students conducted from May to July of this year, 40% reported symptoms consistent with generalized anxiety disorder and 37% with major depressive disorder---increases of 13 and 19 percent, respectively, compared with 2019 data. Another survey conducted in June and July 2020 showed similar results: roughly one-third of more than 3,000 U.S. graduate students reported suffering moderate to severe depression or anxiety, trends also reflected in a survey of graduate students at Carnegie Mellon University. Many of these emerging concerns were also highlighted in a recent House Subcommittee on Research and Technology hearing on the impact of COVID-19 on university research. Data collected by the proposed system could give cues on how such factors are influencing student retention at universities and what actions universities are taking in response and provide crucial information.
We are very grateful for the efforts that your offices have undertaken to improve higher education and support students during the pandemic, and we believe that passing CTA will help prospective students and their families by providing them the critical information they need going forward.

Sincerely,

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