

U.S. Rep. Grothman: Introduces Competency-based Education Act

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(Washington, D.C.) – Congressman Glenn Grothman (R-Glenbeulah) has introduced H.R. 3422, the Competency-based Education Act. This bill provides the framework needed for universities to more easily and effectively provide CBE to students. Grothman has been joined by fellow Wisconsin Congressmen Mike Gallagher (WI-08) and Bryan Steil (WI-01), who are both original cosponsors of the bill.

A major concern in America is the amount of student loan debt students acquire when seeking a traditional four-year college degree. In Wisconsin, the average student graduates with nearly \$30,000 of debt. CBE alleviates this by allowing students to learn at their own pace and often obtain the same degree in a much shorter amount of time. For example, under a CBE program, instead of waiting until the end of a semester to take an exam and complete a course, as you would in a traditional four-year college, if a student demonstrates mastery of the subject, they could take the exam early and complete the course ahead of schedule. This would leave the student time in the school year to begin another class and theoretically complete several classes in the CBE program in the same time it takes a student learning under a traditional education model to finish one. So, they would have less time to accumulate mountains of student loan debt.

In a recent hearing held by the House Committee on Education and Labor, one witness asserted that students learning under a CBE program master the skills taught in the classroom better than other models. Because it is the responsibility of the university offering the CBE program, she claimed that they must stand behind each student's grades in order to preserve an outstanding reputation, which creates an incentive for the university to make sure students are sufficiently grasping the

material being taught.

The University of Wisconsin is a leader in CBE and has seen the program save students thousands of dollars, allow for flexible school schedules and deliver the same quality of results as traditional time-based education programs. Two of their most popular programs are in health care and Information Technology (IT). Should this bill be signed into law, UW has indicated that they would continue to develop programs in these areas as well as business management.

“Making sure our students receive the best education possible to prepare them as future leaders of the country has long been one of my top priorities,” said Grothman. “Equally as important is giving students educational options that do not leave them with a mountain of debt.

I am excited about CBE programs because they take into account each student’s individual learning style and reward them based on their understanding of course material. Additionally, students often complete courses more quickly, reducing the need to prolong their time taking out loans.

The University of Wisconsin has already seen great success from their CBE programs. The problem for other universities is the barriers to entry when setting up the program. My bill provides the framework schools need to set up and expand CBE programs that will be available and effective for the students. I urge my colleagues who don’t know about CBE to learn quickly. CBE programs would be a huge boon to our educational system by producing students who learn more with less debt and get out into the workforce more quickly.”

“In Northeast Wisconsin, we have open jobs in all kinds of fields, but our biggest problem is helping students get the skills to fill them,” said Rep. Gallagher. “Recognizing that a time-based, four-year path to a degree doesn’t work for everyone, the University of Wisconsin system has been a leader in offering students an alternative approach through Competency-based Education. This has given Wisconsinites a way to get into high demand fields on an education path that works for them, and I’m proud to join Rep. Grothman in finding ways we can encourage more states to follow Wisconsin’s lead.”

“As a former UW Regent, I believe that colleges and universities must innovate to meet the challenges of the 21st century,” said Rep. Steil. “The Competency-based Education Act will provide schools with flexible education options to help students

save money and graduate quickly. Forward-thinking universities, like those in the University of Wisconsin System, can take full advantage of these opportunities and give their students the ability to excel. I thank Congressman Grothman for his work on this important issue.”

“Competency-based education is vital to helping meet unmet educational needs, especially for adult and other non-traditional learners. It’s why we started the UW Flexible Option and why we’ve created UW Extended Campus,” said Ray Cross, University of Wisconsin System President. “This legislation is vitally important to expanding educational opportunities and helping the University of Wisconsin continue as a national leader in competency-based education. I thank Rep. Grothman for his leadership on this issue.”

U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman is serving his third term representing Wisconsin’s 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.