

U.S. Sen. Baldwin, U.S. Rep. Levin: Lead effort to create new partnership with states to provide students at community colleges and technical schools more affordability

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America's College Promise helps more students gain the skills needed to succeed

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and Representative Andy Levin, Vice Chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor, today reintroduced the America's College Promise Act. This legislation would create a new federal-state partnership to provide two years of tuition-free access to community or technical college programs that lead to a degree or industry-recognized credential.

“Higher education should be a path to prosperity, not a path into suffocating debt. But unfortunately, college costs and student loan debt are holding back an entire generation and creating a drag on economic growth for our country,” said Senator Baldwin. “The America's College Promise Act creates a new partnership with states to provide more students at community colleges and technical schools an affordable education. We need to out-educate the rest of the world in order to better compete in a 21st century, skills-based economy. The America's College Promise Act will help provide more students the opportunity to gain the skills needed to succeed and help

move our economy forward.”

“We have to make sure that the skills and credentials necessary to be successful in today’s economy are attainable for working families,” said Congressman Andy Levin. “The soaring cost of higher education coupled with the student debt crisis are expanding the wealth gap in our country and exacerbating the problem of income inequality. That’s why today we are introducing a bill to make sure that a free education that leads to gainful employment is accessible to every American. The America’s College Promise Act will transform higher education by guaranteeing two years of free community college, in addition to bolstering important parts of our higher education system like HBCUs. I’m so proud to work with Senator Baldwin and my House Democratic colleagues on this bill, and I look forward to advancing it through the House.”

“In one bold move, the America’s College Promise Act would dramatically boost community college access and success across the country. It would create greater opportunity and enhance our country’s economy. America’s community college leaders urge the House to pass this legislation as soon as possible,” said Walter G. Bumphus, President and CEO of American Association of Community Colleges.

“College promise programs help break down financial obstacles, and enhance accessibility for individuals who believe that college is financially out of reach. The America’s College Promise Act builds upon existing state and local promise programs, and we commend Senator Baldwin and Congressman Levin for his leadership in this area,” said J. Noah Brown, President and CEO of Association of Community College Trustees.

“To secure family-sustaining jobs and careers in today’s globally competitive economy, students and workers with low incomes must have access to affordable, high-quality postsecondary credentials. America’s College Promise Act will provide tuition-and-fee-free community college to all eligible students through a federal-state partnership. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is especially pleased that students and workers with low incomes will be able to attend two years at a community college and two years at an eligible four-year Historically Black College or University or Minority-Serving Institution and receive significant tuition and fee grant aid for their entire college career. The bill also allows undocumented immigrant youth to benefit from the federal-state partnership, which helps to increase college access for immigrant families. CLASP applauds Senator Baldwin and Congressman Levin for his leadership on this issue,” said Olivia Golden,

Executive Director of the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

“On behalf of the 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities, 180 Asian American and Pacific Islander Colleges and Universities, nearly 500 Hispanic-serving Institutions, 106 Historically Black Colleges and Universities and 50 Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), we are grateful for Congressman Andy Levin and Senator Baldwin’s leadership in advancing America’s College Promise Act. It is a good approach for not only removing financial barriers and expanding educational opportunities for 10 million American students seeking 2-year degrees and certificates, but also for expanding educational opportunities for tens of millions of students wishing to seek a 4-year degree,” said Lezli Baskerville, Chair of the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education.

Specifically, this legislation:

Creates a new partnership between the federal government and states and Indian tribes to help them waive resident tuition and fees for two years of community and technical college programs for eligible students, while promoting key reforms to accelerate student success;

Provides a federal match of \$3 for every \$1 invested by the state;

Ensures that programs offer academic credits which are fully transferable to four-year institutions in their state, or occupational training that leads to recognized credentials;

Maintains and encourages state funding for higher education; and

Establishes a new grant program to provide pathways to success at minority serving institutions by helping them cover a significant portion of tuition and fees for the first two years of attendance for low-income students.

The America’s College Promise Act is supported by the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education, American Association of Community Colleges, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), American Federation of Teachers, American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), APIA Scholars, Association of Community College Trustees, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), National Skills Coalition, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, State Higher Education Executive Officers, Student Debt Crisis, The National Education Association, Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and UNCF (United Negro College Fund, Inc.).