

Tucked inside the bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) is a provision to federalize the way colleges and universities award academic credit to transfer students. By eliminating the right of institutions to make distinctions between two competing methods of institutional accreditation, the bill seeks to force degree-granting, regionally-accredited colleges and universities to accept credits from nationally-accredited—typically, for-profit—schools. This is tantamount to demanding that jet engines be built out of bicycle parts.

Only about six percent of American students attend for-profit schools and only four percent of transfers are from a for-profit school to a non-profit college. Yet despite these marginal numbers, the bill would undermine the many statewide articulation systems and inter-institutional transfer agreements by imposing a Washington fix for a trumped-up problem.

The legislation would create costly new bureaucratic headaches for students and institutions, open the door to fraud and abuse, upend the traditional balance between federal regulation and academic autonomy, and dilute the high standards that have made American higher education the envy of the world.

AS THE NATION FACES FIERCE GLOBAL ECONOMIC COMPETITION, FEDERAL POLICY SHOULD ENCOURAGE—NOT PUNISH OR PROHIBIT—HIGH STANDARDS.