

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Alma Adams (NC-12)

Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

"Who Gets the Scholarship? How the Global Shift in College Sports Affects Americans"

Wednesday, September 16, 2026 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

This is the final hearing in this Subcommittee before the House once again returns to our Districts for a long recess. Since the beginning of this Congress, students, families, and teachers have been through the wringer as the Trump Administration ramped up its attacks on public education.

Our higher education system has long been the envy of the world. Thousands of public and private institutions draw the brightest minds from around the world to pursue groundbreaking research and other academic work. International students can offer new perspectives, new ideas, and skills that make America's schools rich in both academic achievement and cultural diversity.

Tragically, the Trump Administration's bigoted attacks on international students have made coming to the U.S. to attend college an uncertain and often dangerous prospect. These students face threats of visa restriction, termination, and deportation. These actions don't just affect these students — they affect all of us, all of us who rely on the valuable contributions they make to our communities. And I worry that today's hearing only serves to further demonize a population already struggling to keep their heads above water.

This is just one of many sins the Trump Administration has committed in higher education more broadly. The Trump Administration has made it harder for everyone to access a quality higher education. As a result of the dismantling of the Department of Education, students and families lost resources, information, and institutional expertise that they relied on to apply for student loans, combat discrimination, access accommodations, and much more.

The Trump Administration undermined the Office of Federal Student Aid, which administers the \$1.7 trillion federal student loan portfolio. In March of 2026, the GAO reported that following massive staff cuts, FSA had stopped key oversight of student loan servicers. As a result, 43 million borrowers have been left without sufficient support.

To make matters worse, last year, Congressional Republicans and the President passed their 'Big, Ugly Bill,' which made the college cost crisis exponentially worse. It limited access to Pell Grants, imposed new borrowing limits, and made repaying loans more expensive. These cuts will make it harder for low-income students to access the Pell Grant and it will push many students towards the predatory private loan market. Taken together, the 'Big Ugly Bill' will make college harder to afford, particularly for underserved communities.

Now, seven million borrowers are currently being forced out of one of the most affordable repayment plans ever created. Those who only strove to improve their education will now be forced into less affordable plans, including

the “Big Ugly Bill’s” new, less affordable repayment plans, which will raise monthly payments by hundreds of dollars for many borrowers. Additionally, millions of borrowers are now closer than ever to defaulting on their loans, meanwhile the GAO report recommended that the Department of Education provide earlier coordination with loan servicers to ensure borrowers have the most accurate information.

Our public colleges are full of bright young minds from all walks of life, from all 50 states, and from all over the world. These students brave the unknown in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families. So we must respect and honor that pursuit by tearing down barriers to entry, not building more walls.

In today’s economy, a college education is the strongest engine of economic mobility and the surest path to the American Dream. College graduates earn more, experience lower unemployment rates, and are better positioned to support their families and contribute to their communities. No one — no matter their race, no matter their religion, nationality, gender, sexuality, or financial situation — should be robbed of that opportunity.

Looking towards the next Congress, Committee Democrats are ready with real, concrete solutions to the college cost crisis — and we are going to fight tooth and nail to make those solutions a reality.

We are going to continue to push back on this Administration’s attacks on public education. We are going to fight to protect and strengthen federal student aid, expand the Pell Grant, and ensure strong oversight of the student loan system so that borrowers are treated fairly. And we will work to create an education system that truly fulfills the promise of the American dream.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.