

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

Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

*"No More Surprises: Reforming College Pricing for Students and Families"*

Tuesday, September 16, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and certainly I want to congratulate the gentleman and thank him for his work as well. Thank you to our witnesses today for being here.

I want to first acknowledge the horrific events that occurred last week. Former Representative Gabby Giffords said it best, "Democratic societies will always have political disagreements, but we must never allow America to become a country that confronts those disagreements with violence...This summer, America has seen multiple politically motivated [attacks] because dangerous people turned to guns to express their disagreements. Both parties have been targeted, and both parties share a moral and patriotic duty to take meaningful action."

Now onto the topic at hand. Attending a reputable college or university remains one of the most critical pathways to economic success and financial freedom that people have access to. The cost of higher education is getting higher and higher every year, to the point where getting a degree has become financially unattainable for many Americans. Our higher education system must be an engine of economic mobility for *all* students, not an instrument for preserving the elite status of wealthy families.

As the cost of college continues to rise, students and families also struggle to understand the true cost of attendance and how much they can expect to spend out-of-pocket on higher education. Too often, families are left to navigate a complex and confusing system of fees, tuition rates, and financial aid options without clear guidance. This can lead to "sticker shock" as families grapple with the total cost of a college education. I spent forty years on a college campus, and I understand what students and families go through.

In my home state of North Carolina, the North Carolina College Connect program removes barriers and provides direct pathways for high school students to apply for and attend college. Programs like North Carolina College Connect cut through much of the bureaucratic red tape that comes with applying for college and help students and families understand the process.

But there is much more to be done. Greater price transparency is essential to ensuring that students and families can make informed decisions about their future. Institutions of higher education can and must do more to be more transparent with students and their families about the cost of attendance and about their student aid options.

That being said, more transparency will not address many of the root causes of the rising cost of college. Right now, our country is facing a college affordability crisis that has been made exponentially worse by the Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans.

The "Big Ugly Law" raises costs for current and future borrowers by:

- Forcing student loan borrowers into unaffordable repayment plans,

- Eliminating resources to help struggling borrowers, and
- Pushing students toward the predatory private loan market by eliminating Graduate PLUS loans, capping Parent PLUS loans, and limiting access to Pell Grants.

And to make it worse, in March, the Trump Administration ordered sweeping Reductions in Force (RIFs) at the Department of Education, laying off over half of the staff at the Office of Federal Student Aid. And so we've seen [reports](#) of calls going unanswered, glitches going unfixed, and disruptions in colleges' abilities to calculate their own financial aid offers. How can we expect colleges to deliver transparency if they themselves don't have the necessary information?

At the end of the day, transparency in college costs is a wonderful goal. But increased transparency is not going to help families afford the cost of college once they understand the total cost. Addressing transparency is a tiny drop in the bucket compared to the larger issues that students are dealing with.

So, I hope that we can have a productive discussion about transparency. But we must also keep in mind that the way to achieve affordable education isn't just by making the net price easier to find on the school website. Democrats are committed to ensuring that students have access to safe and affordable higher education that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to our discussion today. Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.