

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 6392, Home School Graduation Recognition Act of 2025

H.R. 6472, To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for in-state tuition rates for certain residents of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and the United States Virgin Islands, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6498, Student Financial Clarity Act

H.R. 6502, College Financial Aid Clarity Act

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Thursday, December 11, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Today, we are here to mark up four education bills intended to increase transparency and access to higher education.

The first bill under consideration is the *Home School Graduation Recognition Act*, which essentially restates and clarifies the current law allowing home-schooled students to be eligible for federal student aid.

Under federal law, home-schooled students are eligible for federal student aid. The *Higher Education Act* (HEA) specifically allows students who complete a home school program recognized under their state's law to qualify for Title IV aid, including Pell Grants and federal student loans. Each state sets its own requirements for the education of homeschool students. There is wide variance in what the states require, with some states, like Texas, not even requiring courses in science or history. HEA confirms that homeschooled students must meet eligibility requirements, whatever they are in their state, to receive federal aid if educated according to those state rules, but continues to allow schools to set their admissions standards for students, including those educated at home.

Again, it is my understanding that the bill does not make any substantive changes to the present law but further restates and clarifies what is already required by the *Higher Education Act*. I will have an amendment that further clarifies the bill's provisions, specifically to point out that they apply to the federal student aid eligibility under Title IV of the HEA. With that addition, I will vote in favor of the bill.

The next bill we will consider amends the *Higher Education Act* to require public colleges and universities to provide in-state tuition rates for certain residents of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and the United States Virgin Islands.

I support this initiative in principle, but we cannot ignore that states and public colleges set their *own* tuition rates based on state budgets and priorities.

Democrats will propose an amendment to help offset these costs by providing federal funding, similar to the District of Columbia Tuition Assistant Grant ("DC TAG") Program, which supports D.C. residents with up to

\$10,000 per year, to a total of \$50,000, to pay the difference between the higher out-of-state tuition and the lower in-state tuition at public universities, which is necessary because Washington, D.C. does not have an adequate number of public universities. It is the federal government's responsibility to shoulder the cost of this mandate rather than shift that mandate and cost to other states who are already facing financial strain.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment and the bill.

Next, we will consider the *Student Financial Clarity Act*, H.R. 6498, which amends the *Higher Education Act* to expand the data requirements of the College Scorecard and establish a Universal Net Price Calculator. While transparency is vital, we need to acknowledge that the Trump Administration is actively dismantling the Department of Education. As of now, the Institute of Education Sciences, which used to have almost 200 employees, only has a handful.

How can they possibly handle the workload from this bill, which would require them to manage data for thousands of colleges and universities, on top of their current responsibilities?

In light of this, I will propose an amendment to ensure that we provide adequate resources to the Department, including funding for IES, the Office of Federal Student Aid, and the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, to actually implement these changes.

We will be offering amendments that:

- Require the Education Department to do the work at the Department and not farm it out to other agencies.
- Mandating that the Universal Net Price Calculator show how student aid cuts from the "Big Ugly Law" will actually impact students.
- And codifying recent Gainful Employment and Financial Value Transparency regulations.

These amendments are the very least we could do to improve the legislation.

Finally, H.R. 6502, the *College Financial Aid Clarity Act*, requires institutions to provide information on students' financial aid offers, including estimated costs, grants, scholarships, and loan information.

Financial aid offers are documents provided by colleges and universities to students that detail the amount and types of aid the school is offering. Financial aid offers are essential for helping students and families understand the cost of college and make better-informed decisions. It is worth noting that, under current federal law, colleges and universities are required to disclose information to students and families on the cost of attending the institution, and that has to include tuition, fees, books, supplies, room and board, transportation costs, and any additional costs of the program that a student is enrolled in.

While this bill attempts to improve transparency, its focus on averages rather than individualized cost disclosures could negatively impact students' ability to compare aid offers across institutions. This shift toward institutional-level reporting could make it harder for families to make informed decisions about the true cost of college, as institutions will need to provide more information, which would actually cause more confusion.

Though I acknowledge my colleagues' efforts on the other side of the aisle, this bill still needs further improvements to ensure that students and families can easily compare college costs and aid information.

To improve the proposal, Democrats are prepared to offer amendments to:

- Require the Department of Education to perform the work the bill authorizes rather than farming it out to other agencies.
- Promote greater standardization and simpler forms for students to make real apples-to-apples aid offer comparisons.

Hopefully, those amendments will be adopted.

Before I close, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that, while I recognize the good intent behind these bills, I am disappointed they are being considered after the Republicans already passed the "*Big Ugly Bill*."

Earlier this year, that bill that made college even more unaffordable and unattainable for millions of Americans. It eliminates Graduate PLUS loans, caps Parent PLUS loans, and limits access to Pell Grants. It also pushes students into the predatory private loan markets with higher interest rates and fewer protections.

It's difficult to reconcile that harmful legislation with today's efforts. We are all aware of the polls that show that many believe that college is not worth the cost. The solution should not be to ignore that fact. We should make college more affordable rather than have students cut their education short because they cannot afford the cost. Bills that explain the cost do not reduce the cost, any more than — as a farmer would say — weighing the pig does not make the pig fatter.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.