



Office of the President

December 7, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2175 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chair
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2434 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Chair Guthrie:

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) is a national alliance of educator preparation programs dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based preparation that assures educators are profession ready as they enter the classroom. AACTE's member institutions include public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. Through advocacy and capacity building, AACTE promotes innovation and effective practices that strengthen educator preparation. The vitality of our democracy depends on an engaged citizenry, and that engagement begins in our nation's classrooms; ensuring support for the institutions that prepare our teachers is a key factor in creating the educated citizenry our forefathers envisioned.

AACTE is pleased that the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce is moving forward the process to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) through the introduction of the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act. However, we are disappointed with the elimination of Title II of current law focused on Teacher Quality Enhancement, the TEACH grants, and key loan forgiveness programs. At a time when the profession is facing declining enrollments, a diversity gap between teachers and students, recruitment and retention challenges, as well as teacher shortages across the nation, the removal of federal supports hinders the profession's ability to address these challenges.

Through this elimination, the PROSPER Act ends the *only* federal initiative dedicated to reforming and strengthening educator preparation at institutions of higher education (IHEs): the [Teacher Quality Partnership \(TQP\) grant program](#). Despite its relatively low funding levels since its creation in the 2008 HEA reauthorization, this program has enabled reform and innovation in 68 educator preparation

programs in 28 states across the nation. Deepening the partnership between a high-need school or district and an IHE, TQP grantees commit not only to offering 2 or more years of induction to their graduates in the schools, but also to the professional development of all the educators in the schools. TQP programs prepare teachers in high-need fields, and if it is a residency program, the participants commit to teaching for 3 years in the school or school district where they were trained. Schools and districts involved in TQP see improvements in the quality and retention of their teachers and in the quality of their students' learning experiences and achievements. In addition, TQP grants have funded the implementation of evidence-based reforms in teacher preparation programs. This targeted program continues to support innovation and reform in educator preparation programs across the country.

The PROSPER Act also eliminates the [TEACH grants](#) starting in July 2018. TEACH grants support undergraduate and graduate students preparing to be teachers in high-need fields. Recipients are required to complete a service component teaching in their high-need field in a high-need school; otherwise the grant converts to a loan. TEACH grants are used by IHEs to recruit high-quality teacher candidates – one must maintain a 3.25 GPA to continue to receive this non-need-based grant. The creation of the TEACH grants recognized the importance of supporting the teaching profession by creating pathways into the teacher pipeline. With college costs soaring and fewer students studying to become teachers, the abrupt abolition of this targeted financial support will only exacerbate the challenges facing the profession.

In addition, the PROSPER Act phases out loan forgiveness programs that support those in the profession: the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, the Stafford Loan Forgiveness Program for Teachers, and the Loan Forgiveness for Service in Areas of National Need. These loan forgiveness programs are utilized as a recruitment tool for prospective educators and support the retention of teachers in the nation's classrooms. With many school districts struggling to meet their workforce needs and educator preparation programs facing declining enrollments, ending these loan forgiveness programs cuts off another incentive to enter the profession.

AACTE is hopeful that the committee will take steps to address these concerns as you mark up the PROSPER Act. We recognize that this is the initial step in a long process, and we look forward to working with you to craft a bill that reflects the Congress's dedication to the educator profession and the students in our nation's classrooms. To that end, please do not hesitate at any time to reach out to AACTE's Director of Government Relations, Deborah Koolbeck (dkoolbeck@aacte.org or 202-478-4506), for information or assistance.

Sincerely,



Lynn M. Gangone, Ed.D.
President and CEO