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ASEE

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Brett Guthrie Davis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and the  
Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Robert C. Scott  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Susan A. Davis  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and the  
Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives

December 11, 2017

Dear Committee on Education and the Workforce Leadership,

As a global leader in engineering and engineering technology education, the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act (HEA)* through H.R. 4508 the *Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act*. ASEE's more than 12,000 members include deans, department heads, faculty members, students, and government and industry representatives who hail from all disciplines of engineering and engineering technology. Engineering education is a critical piece of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) portfolio. Engineering education also has a broad impact on general STEM education as engineering's focus on design and analysis enhances problem solving and encourages students to connect science and math topics to real-world applications. ASEE's membership is composed of 400 engineering and engineering technology colleges and affiliates, more than 50 corporations, and numerous government agencies and professional associations. ASEE is committed to advancing innovation, excellence, and access at all levels of education for the engineering profession.

While the *PROSPER Act* proposes important reforms to higher education, ASEE has several concerns about provisions included in the bill. The *PROSPER Act* represents an important step in ensuring postsecondary education continues to be responsive to the needs of an ever-changing workforce while emphasizing innovation, access, and completion. ASEE supports the bill's efforts to simplify federal aid programs, reduce burdensome regulations on institutions of higher education, and its commitment to ensuring innovative postsecondary education practices like competency-based education. The expansion of Federal Work Study funds and other changes to the program are welcome improvements. Additionally, the level of transparency the *PROSPER Act* will bring to students and families by providing program-level debt and earnings metrics for students who receive federal student aid (through the proposed *College Dashboard*), is an important, though incomplete step. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) occupations are projected to grow by 8.9 percent from 2014 to 2024.<sup>1</sup> It is critical that postsecondary education is prepared to meet this, and other needs.

ASEE is concerned that the *PROSPER Act* will result in fewer teachers prepared to teach

engineering and other STEM subjects due to the proposed elimination of Title II-Teacher Quality Enhancement. While the bill proposes to replace this title with one focused on earn-and-learn programs, this could be accomplished without eliminating support for teacher preparation. The lack of teacher training focused on STEM, and engineering in particular, is an important issue facing K-12 education. We believe that this reauthorization provides an opportunity to improve support for teacher training programming, not complete elimination of that support.

ASEE recognizes, along with the rest of the higher education community, that student financial aid is too complicated. While the simplification H.R. 4508 proposes is important, the bill also removes important student aid options, particularly for graduate students. The loss of access to Federal Work Study funds, the elimination of Grad PLUS loans, and the reduction in available loan funds, will significantly raise the cost of graduate education. Additionally, the loss of loan forgiveness within loan repayment plans, including the elimination of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), will raise costs for students. ASEE appreciates efforts like the Pell Grant “bonus” included in the bill, but the elimination of student aid support for graduate students, and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), lessen the positive impact these proposed changes to federal aid could have had.

We support the points made in the letter from the Coalition for International Education with regard to Title VI programs that support the development of our national’s deep expertise in world regions, global issues, international business, and foreign languages. As a global enterprise, these issues are critical to high quality engineering and engineering technology education as well as our ability to compete in global markets and to promote our national security.

Finally, ASEE appreciates the fact that the *PROSPER* Act address many of the recommendations included in the “Task Force on Federal Regulation of Higher Education” report. These efforts to streamline and reduce the regulatory burden on institutions of higher education will allow for more resources to be devoted to students and less to paperwork and compliance. That said, some of the regulations the bill proposes for elimination will lessen accountability and protection of students. This includes the repeal of regulations around gainful employment and the 90/10 rule which governs how much federal aid private for-profit colleges can receive.

The STEM workforce, particularly the engineers, technologists, and computer scientists, is the driving force behind innovation and our economic development. Postsecondary education plays a leading role in the preparation of this workforce. ASEE is committed to advancing the development of innovative approaches and solutions to engineering and engineering technology education. We look forward to working with the committee to ensure that postsecondary education in our country is a driving force in its growth, success, and prosperity.

Sincerely,



Dr, Bevlee Watford  
President of ASEE

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.esa.doc.gov/sites/default/files/stem-jobs-2017-update.pdf>