

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frederica Wilson (FL-24)**

Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

*"Lowering Costs and Increasing Value for Students, Institutions, and Taxpayers"*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Thursday, July 27, 2023 | 10:15 a.m.

---

Thank you, Chairman Owens, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today and thank you to all of the students especially, in the audience and welcome to the Education committee.

Let's be crystal clear, the evidence is everywhere in every segment of society, that a college degree is the surest path to the American Dream.

This is especially true for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, like first-generation college students who have not had the luxury of guidance from parents or family members that have attended college.

Students with bachelor's degrees earn nearly \$1 million more over the course of their careers than those with only a high school diploma.

To ensure students have access to the promise of higher education, the Department of Education (ED) must hold bad actors in higher education accountable for student success.

Stronger accountability regulations in higher education saves students money for and prevents them from wasting money on worthless degrees.

Under President Biden's leadership, the Education Department has done just that.

In June, the Department put forth the strongest gainful employment rule ever.

This rule ensures that institutions truly prepare students for success in the workforce, protecting them from low-quality job training programs.

The Department has also worked to enforce Borrower Defense regulations, providing debt relief for borrowers defrauded by their institution.

As a result, the Biden Administration has forgiven more than \$13.3 billion for 1 million borrowers.

Let's compare this to the work of the previous administration, who worked every day to repeal important accountability measures that were meant to protect students originally put in place by Democrats.

Stronger accountability regulations in higher education also saves taxpayers' money and prevents federal aid from going to predatory programs.

Far too many tax dollars have gone to dishonest for-profit colleges that heavily rely on federal student aid funding and then they target underrepresented students.

Foolishly advocating for a free market approach to college accountability only lines the pockets of for-profit companies and CEOs.

The Biden Administration's efforts to safeguard students from subpar institutions are saving taxpayers money.

As we open up this hearing, I hope our colleagues from across the aisle will take accountability seriously and work with Congressional Democrats to protect students and improve college accessibility.

Taxpayers, students, and the economy as a whole stand to gain when improved accountability measures are put in place in higher education.

With that Mr. Chair, I yield back and I look forward to a productive discussion. Thank you.

