

The Go to High School, Go to College Act

This bipartisan, bicameral proposal offered by Representatives Marcia Fudge (D - OH) and Elise Stefanik (R-NY), along with Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Mark Warner (D -VA), would improve secondary and postsecondary outcomes for students and maximize the efficiency of federal student aid.

The Go to High School, Go to College Act would authorize a pilot program for 250 institutions of higher education that would allow high school students participating in dual enrollment programs offered by that institution the opportunity to apply for Pell grant funding to earn transferable college credits, including core general education requirements.

The proposed College in High School Federal Pell Grant Pilot Program would build upon the Department of Education's Experimental Site for Dual Enrollment in two important ways:

- Students would have the opportunity to earn up to two semesters worth of college credit before drawing down from their 12 semester Pell Grant limit, ensuring that students participating in dual enrollment programs are not penalized financially from trying college.
- The pilot program includes a robust evaluation mechanism, which the current experimental site lacks.

Additionally, the pilot program retains and builds upon other student protections and quality assurance mechanisms in the existing experimental site, including ensuring that students have credit transfer options available to them for college credit earned in a dual enrollment program beyond just the issuing institution of higher education.

This proposal would rigorously test an exciting policy proposal to increase college access and help low-income students afford and complete college degrees and inform the discussion around how the federal government can support dual or concurrent enrollment programs. Higher college completion rates and reduced time to earn a degree would ultimately save money within the Pell grant program.

Program Benefits

- Expanding access to dual enrollment programs will increase college completion rates and ultimately reduce the time and cost of earning a college degree. In many states, participation in dual enrollment programs by low income students is unacceptably low, largely driven by cost barriers. The federal government should allow greater flexibility within the need-based Pell grant program to increase opportunities for low income students to earn college credits and degrees.
- Numerous rigorous, multi-institution and statewide quantitative research studies in more than a dozen states, including a randomized control trial study conducted by the American Institutes for Research, have shown that these programs increase high school graduation rates, improve college readiness, and provide gains in college access, persistence, and completion for a diverse group of students. In addition, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviewed dozens of studies against their strict criteria and found a medium-to-large evidence base that shows positive impacts on college enrollment and completion from participating in dual enrollment.

The Problem

- Recent national data from the National Center for Education Statistics and the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights demonstrates that nationwide access to dual enrollment programs is inequitable. Low income students and students of color particularly are participating at much lower levels than their affluent white peers. However, research shows that dual enrollment programs can be most effective when they are serving low income and underrepresented students.

- Currently, too many students enrolled in postsecondary education do not earn credentials or degrees. The nation needs to invest wisely in strategies like dual enrollment that produce strong postsecondary outcomes for students, including low-income and underrepresented students.

Benefits of Go to High School, Go to College Act

- This proposal would allow more low-income students to access dual enrollment programs by accessing Pell grants, thereby increasing college access and helping more low-income students afford and complete college degrees. Due to the higher college completion rates and the faster time to degree, the pilot will be designed to evaluate and test whether this is a proposal that could save money for the Pell Grant program.