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The Honorable Michael Capuano
1414 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Capuano:

As Congress considers the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success and Prosperity through Education Reform Act (PROSPER Act), I want to share Boston University's views on the bill.

BU believes a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act should prioritize college access, help students and parents make informed choices about college attendance, and promote affordability in higher education. Unfortunately, the PROSPER Act (H.R. 4508) includes several provisions which are harmful to our undergraduate and graduate students.

Our concerns include:

- **Undergraduates would lose access to Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and subsidized loans.** SEOG helps the neediest students afford college, and more than 16% of BU's entering freshmen received SEOG funds during the 2017-18 academic year. If SEOG funds are eliminated without being redirected into other grant aid, such as Pell grants, this would be a significant loss for college affordability.
- **Graduate students would lose access to both Graduate PLUS Loans and Federal Work Study (FWS), and Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) would be level-funded.**
 - The elimination of the Graduate PLUS Loan, which has generous approval and repayment terms, runs counter to the nation's need for a highly educated workforce that is equipped with 21st century skills. Pushing graduate students into the private market is particularly problematic for students pursuing vital careers in areas such as social work and teaching because private lenders may be less willing to issue loans to finance their studies or may only offer loans at higher rates.
 - Taking FWS away from graduate students removes a valuable source of self-help and work-based learning. For example, FWS allows graduate students in the BU School of Education to supervise a literacy-building program for local elementary schools.
 - The bill would keep GAANN funding at its current level through fiscal year 2024, despite the urgent need for a workforce armed with the science, engineering, and mathematics degrees that GAANN supports. At BU, GAANN has enabled graduate students with financial need to successfully complete doctoral training in essential fields, such as computer science.
- **Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) would be eliminated.** Through PSLF, students can pursue worthy and necessary occupations with lower salaries – such as primary medicine, public health, and social work – without worrying they will face

insurmountable debt. Combined with the elimination of loan forgiveness through Income Based Repayment, this is a significant loss for students entering careers that benefit the nation.

- **The TRIO college preparatory programs would be authorized at \$50 million below their currently appropriated level.** BU helps low-income high school students become college-ready through Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math Science. These programs should be supported, not reduced through authorization language or unfunded set asides that could jeopardize services to students in existing programs that demonstrate positive outcomes.
- **Colleges would be required to disburse financial aid on a weekly or monthly basis.** Institutions already have the flexibility to disburse aid more frequently if it is helpful to their specific student population; this should remain an option, rather than a mandate.

While we have significant concerns with the bill, we support these provisions:

- **Federal Work Study funding would be doubled and there would be increased flexibility in student employment options.** Both of these provisions will help BU students prepare for work life after college.
- **Student loan origination fees will be eliminated,** lowering the cost of borrowing for students.
- **A Pell Grant Bonus Award would be created.** This will encourage students to accelerate their progress toward graduation.
- **Accreditors would be permitted to use a risk-based review process** for universities that have a proven history of excellent performance. This will allow accreditors to spend more time addressing problems at institutions that pose the greatest potential risk to students.
- **The Pell Grant Payment and Disbursement Schedules would be released by November 1,** rather than February 1. This change in the Department of Education's Master Calendar will allow colleges to provide earlier and more accurate financial aid awards to students.
- **The Federal Quality Assurance Program would be restored,** giving schools the flexibility to make federal income verification less burdensome for students.
- **The Selective Service registration requirement for students over age 26 would be repealed.** This will allow more students to be eligible for federal financial aid without requiring universities to determine whether a student knowingly and willingly failed to register.

I urge legislators to take the opportunity to enhance federal support for both undergraduate and graduate students as the Higher Education Act reauthorization moves through Congress. Please contact me or Jennifer Grodsky of BU Federal Relations [grodsky@bu.edu, (202) 393-7272] if you have questions about our feedback on the bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Brown