

Durbin, Duckworth Join Baldwin, House Members To Introduce Legislation To Lower Cost Of Community And Tech College

October 23 2023 10:11 AM



CHICAGO – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) along with U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) introduced bicameral legislation with Representatives Teresa Leger Fernández (D-NM-03), Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA-03), and Madeleine Dean (D-PA-03) to make two-year technical

and community college accessible to more Americans by waiving tuition for eligible students.

“Community colleges provide a springboard for students who wish to continue their education and a foundation for students to find good paying jobs through quality job training programs. I am proud to say that Illinois has prioritized higher education funding so that free community college, which gives motivated students a path to receiving a solid education without debt, is attainable. It’s time we also prioritize this funding at the federal level to start growing a stronger workforce,” said Durbin.

“Those of us who weren’t always sure we’d be able to go to college understand the power of a diploma,” Duckworth said. “I’m proud to help introduce this bicameral legislation because making community colleges more accessible can help prepare more hard-working Americans for fulfilling and good-paying careers. Our nation’s future becomes brighter when all communities can access opportunities for higher education.”

“America’s technical and community colleges give students the education and skills they need to land good-paying jobs in high-demand industries and grow our economy. But for too many students, the cost of a two-year degree is holding them back, hamstringing businesses who need skilled workers and preventing them from providing for their families,” said Baldwin. “America’s College Promise will break down those barriers for students who want to pursue a technical education, training tomorrow’s workforce without saddling young people with debt that prevents them from buying a house, starting a family, and contributing to our economy.”

“New Mexico knows how free community college unlocks opportunities for students - from the recent high school graduate to the experienced worker who wants to go back to school. Students are going to school at higher rates in New Mexico than most states,” said Leger Fernández. “The America’s College Promise Act builds on New Mexico’s example to make sure that students across the country can attend community college without the burden of tuition and fees. This bill will provide funds for services to help students successfully complete their degrees. To unlock the door for a brighter future, it also reduces the financial burden for low-income students to attend TCUs, HBCUs, and MSIs.”

“Community colleges play a unique and vital role in providing students access a quality postsecondary degree. Regrettably, the chronic underfunding of community colleges is jeopardizing their ability to support their students and communities. The America’s College Promise Act is a major investment in expanding opportunities for students and building back a better economy. This bill is one critical piece of our comprehensive plan to make quality higher education more affordable for students and families and developing a competitive 21st century workforce,” said Scott.

“Higher education should promise a bright future, yet the cost of college inhibits that opportunity for many and burdens many more with immense debt — we must change this for future generations,” said Dean. “As a professor, it was a profound joy to witness students claim their education and carve out their own future — and I want to ensure that for more young adults and those looking to make a career change. The America’s College Promise Act will help make that a reality, from providing tuition-free community college courses to expanding funding for HBCUs and trade schools. I look forward to this important legislation being brought to the House floor.”

The *America’s College Promise Act of 2023* will make the skills and credentials necessary to succeed in our economy more accessible to all students by creating a new federal-state partnership to provide two years of tuition-free community or technical college. Specifically, the *America’s College Promise Act of 2023*:

- Creates a partnership between the federal government and states to waive tuition and fees for two years of community and technical college programs for eligible students, while promoting key reforms to accelerate student success;
- Creates a sliding scale for federal share beginning at 100% for the first year and ending at 80% for the fifth and subsequent years;
- Ensures that programs offer academic credits that are transferable to four-year institutions in their state, or occupational training that leads to recognized credentials;
- Maintains and encourages state funding for higher education;
- Establishes a student success fund to improve enrollment, retention, transfer, or completion rates and labor market outcomes for underserved student populations, including students of color and low-income and first generation college students, who attend community and technical colleges at disproportionate rates;
- Waives two years of tuition and fees for eligible students at tribal colleges and universities; and
- Establishes a new grant program to provide pathways to success at historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions by covering a significant portion of tuition and fees for the first two years of attendance for low-income students.

The *America’s College Promise Act of 2023* is cosponsored by Senators Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), Patty Murray (D-WA), and Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), in addition to seven co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The bicameral legislation is supported by the American Federation of Teachers; AFL-CIO; Association of Community College Trustees; The Education Trust; The Hope Center at Temple University; The National Education Association; The Century

Foundation Higher Education Team; Higher Learning Advocates; The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); Asian Pacific Islander American Scholars; American Association of Community Colleges; Young Invincibles; and Jobs for the Future.

A one-pager on this legislation is available [here](#). Full text of this legislation is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).