

Fact Sheet – America’s College Promise Act of 2021

On April 27, 2021, Representative Andy Levin (D-MI) and Education and Labor Committee Chair Bobby Scott (D-VA) along with Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and HELP Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) introduced the America’s College Promise Act of 2021.

This legislation aims to provide two years of tuition-free community college to all Americans, including Dreamers, through the formation of federal-state partnerships. The measure also establishes a new grant program to help low-income students attending four-year Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) cover a portion of their tuition and fees for their first two-years of attendance.

Federal-State Partnership:

- The legislation awards federal-state partnership grants to states that agree to waive community college resident tuition and fees for eligible students.
- The federal government would provide 75% of the average national community college tuition to states for each eligible student. States would be responsible for covering the remaining 25% and would also be required to certify their commitment to aligning K-12 and higher education and improving transfer pathways between institutions of higher education in their state.
- Federal funding for the federal-state partnership is guaranteed through the use of “mandatory” spending, as opposed to funding the partnership through the annual appropriations process.
- A state with remaining grant funds after covering tuition and fees for all eligible students may use those funds to improve student outcomes, invest in and diversify the academic workforce, expand high-quality academic and occupational skills training programs at community colleges, or expand access to dual or concurrent enrollment programs.
- Participating states must meet maintenance-of-effort requirements by maintaining higher education spending at a level equal to the average of the three previous years.

Student Eligibility:

- Community college students eligible to receive tuition assistance under this bill are those who qualify for in-state community college tuition. Individuals who are precluded from qualifying for in-state tuition due to their immigration status are also eligible for tuition assistance under this measure.
- Students receiving tuition assistance under this legislation must also be enrolled in a Title IV-eligible program at least half-time.
- Students may receive tuition assistance for up to six semesters (or the equivalent).

Student Success Fund:

- The legislation also authorizes an annual formula grant program funded at \$1 billion per year called the Student Success Fund.

- Under the Student Success Fund, states would receive formula grant funding to support evidence-based strategies aimed at improving student outcomes.
- States receiving these funds would be required to cover 25% of their allocation for the first four years of the program; 50% for years five and six; 75% for years seven and eight; and 100% for years nine and ten.