



DAILY BRIEFING

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

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Bipartisan Infrastructure Package Signed Into Law Includes Targeted Expansion of Private Activity Bonds

Yesterday, President Joe Biden signed into law [H.R.3684, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – Public Law 117-58](#), which provides major new investments for the nation’s roads, bridges, and public transit. Of interest to the NCHER membership, the new law amends the tax-exempt bond provisions of the Internal Revenue Code to add two new categories of exempt facility private activity bonds (PABs) – broadband and carbon capture projects - and doubles private activity bond volume for surface transportation projects to \$30 billion from \$15 billion. It also features other provisions that are expected to boost public-private partnerships. The President also signed an executive order outlining six priorities for implementation of the new law, including building resilient infrastructure that can protect against climate change; effective coordination with state, local, tribal, and territorial governments; and equitable

investment of the dollars.

House Education and Labor Committee Republicans Write Letter to FTC on Unfair Targeting of For-Profit Colleges

On Friday, House Education and Labor Committee Ranking Member Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and four of her colleagues wrote a [letter](#) to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) expressing concern over the commission's recent announcement that it will use Penalty Offense Authority to target for-profit colleges and universities that it feels are making misleading or deceptive claims to students and assess financial penalties against these schools. The representatives ask the FTC several questions about how it selected the list of colleges to target, what enforcement authority the FTC has to oversee for-profit schools, the impact that its policy decision will have on borrower defense to repayment claims, and how these institutions will be treated fairly as there is no similar effort targeting public and private, nonprofit institutions. The letter also asks the FTC how it is coordinating with other federal and state governmental authorities like state attorneys general, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), how it can be free of influence from the CFPB, and its plans to communicate more details about the enforcement authority to the higher education community.

APLU Report Examines How Public Universities are Driving Innovative Solutions”

The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) recently released a report titled, [Building a Future Workforce for All Learners: How Public and Land-grant Universities and Urban Serving Universities Drive Innovative Solutions](#), outlining the ways that public research universities can meet the upskilling needs of a rapidly changing labor force so workers can attain better careers. The report outlines how public universities are using a diverse array of strategies to build 21st century skills for learners through new models for higher education and life-long learning. It also provides recommendations for public universities to consider as they work to provide the skills needed for short-term job opportunities while also enabling students to earn credit for a longer-term degree.

To help public universities meet the needs of all learners, the report makes the case for:

- University innovation through partnerships with educational and workforce organizations: Meeting learner and workforce needs requires public higher

education to build partnerships with employers, community colleges, workforce boards, and other important education and workforce stakeholders to accomplish important goals for employers and students.

- Designing flexibility for learners from diverse backgrounds: With fewer students taking the “traditional” route of entering college directly after high school and continuing until they have obtained a bachelor’s degree, students will need additional flexibility in the future.
- Innovations that provide evidence-based practices for helping students gain skills, credentials that demonstrate employer-validated skills, and support to achieve their goals: Incorporating innovations that include opportunities to earn new skills or reskill/upskill work-and-learn models, and interdisciplinary study programs. Additionally, institutions can work to provide greater skills transparency through employer-verified credentials and digital badges. Lastly, universities can aim to make better use of technology to personalize education to improve student success.

U.S. Department of Education News

For today’s *Federal Register*, click [here](#).

The following announcement was posted to Federal Student Aid’s Knowledge Center website:

[\(APP-21-23\) Issue Alert: CPS Reprocessing on Nov. 12, 2021, for Application and Correction Records with Null Values for IRS Fields](#)

General News

Dr. Beth Akers, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, participates in Strada Education Network’s [Lessons Earned](#) podcast where she talks about whether the so-called “student debt crisis” is really a crisis. Dr. Akers says that, on average, college is still worth the price – if you do it right and make the most of it.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that roughly 99,000 more community college students from California were awarded a Cal Grant this fall, according to the California Student Aid Commission. The commission credited expanded eligibility requirements in the 2021-22 state budget for the increase, which eliminated restrictions on state financial aid based on age and time out of high school.

[NPR](#) reports that the bipartisan infrastructure package recently signed into law includes

\$65 billion for improving broadband internet access for students without strong internet connection. The improved access is intended to help college students living in rural areas and tribal communities, 68 percent of which do not have access to broadband according to the Federal Communications Commission.

[*The Washington Post*](#) reports that Howard University protesters reached a deal with the university to end a high-profile month-long protest, but the terms remain confidential. The students voiced their concerns over lack of representation on the school board and deteriorating living conditions in student housing.

[*The Associated Press*](#) reports that the Maine Commission to Study College Affordability and College Completion will begin meeting this week. The Maine Legislature created the commission that will study the impact education debt has on Maine residents and the potential for no-cost community college programs in the state.

[*Inside Higher Ed*](#) reports on Shaun Harper's presentation titled, "Racial Equity Through Raceless Policy Making?" and how the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on minority and low-income students has only intensified the need for college leaders to take equity seriously.

[*Inside Higher Ed*](#) highlights how Waubensee Community College is launching a new initiative to boost the enrollment and graduation rates of Latinx students and adult learners.

[*NPR*](#) examines how colleges and universities are turning to a growing area of study known as "suicide postvention" to prevent mental health crises and to provide interventions for people who are actively suicidal.

[*Higher Ed Dive*](#) shares research on how university governing boards are outsourcing presidential appointment responsibility to firms that have little to no experience in higher education.

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