NCHER

2026 FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA

Higher Education Finance Reform Priorities

Recommendations for Congress and the Executive Branch

NCHER supports practical, bipartisan reforms that expand access to high-quality postsecondary learning and maximize human potential. Our agenda improves student outcomes, protects taxpayers, expands workforce mobility, and helps usher in economic growth and prosperity for generations to come.

1 Access & Affordability

- **Restore targeted FAFSA data elements**
  Bring back housing status and multiple-family-members-in-college questions to target aid accurately.
- **Tie the maximum Pell Grant to inflation**
  Protect purchasing power and close the projected Pell shortfall.
- **Let 529 plans cover transportation**
  Allow a capped commuting expense for community college, rural, and workforce learners.
- **Streamline education tax benefits**
  Consolidate overlapping credits and reinvest any savings in Pell.

2 Workforce & Lifelong Learning

- **Expand workforce-oriented financing**
  Invest federal dollars in innovative, public-private financing models that offer students consumer-friendly loans and wraparound support services.
- **Create a Federal-State Talent Grant Program**
  Consolidate fragmented access and career pathway programs into one flexible, performance-based grant.
- **Create tax-advantaged skill savings accounts**
  Let workers, employers, and government fund upskilling without new debt.

3 Enhance Student Financial Wellness and Literacy

- **Fund financial wellness counseling**
  Competitive grants for evidence-based counseling delivered by school, nonprofit, employer, state, and servicer partners throughout the student lifecycle.
- **Publish APRs on federal student loans**
  Align disclosures with the private marketplace so families can compare before they borrow.
- **Set minimum standards for aid offers**
  Standardized core terms, with loans shown separately from grants and scholarships.

4 Private Financing & Innovation

- **Reform Qualified Student Loan Bonds**
  Exempt QSLBs from volume caps and the AMT to lower loan costs. **H.R. 2660 / S. 3761**
- **Modernize Preferred Lender List rules**
  Let schools offer objective lender information while preserving consumer guardrails.
- **Support responsible private lending**
  Preserve a competitive market and authorize limited regulatory sandboxes for new underwriting and repayment models.

5 Repayment Success

- **Fund servicing and borrower support**
  Stable funding for outreach, digital customer care, and delinquency prevention.
- **Permanently extend Account Maintenance Fees**
  Sustain guaranty agency default aversion, rehabilitation, and outreach.
- **Stabilize the federal repayment system** EXECUTIVE BRANCH
  Clear communications, servicer accountability, and predictive analytics that trigger supportive outreach before borrowers fall behind.

6 Fraud Prevention & Protection

- **Fund a student loan fraud prevention initiative**
  Coordinated federal campaigns and interagency enforcement against scams, identity theft, and deceptive debt-relief schemes, as AI accelerates fraud aimed at federal and private borrowers.
- **Share data, collaborate with stakeholders, and educate the public**
  Public education and data-sharing among the Department of Education, Treasury, institutions of higher education, and trusted private partners to break up fraud rings.