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COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

Questions for the Record

**Full Committee Hearing:
"American Education in Crisis"
February 8, 2023
10:00 a.m.**

Representative Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA)

Dr. Monty Sullivan:

1. I represent Pennsylvania's Fifteenth Congressional District, which covers eighteen counties and about one-third of the landmass of Pennsylvania. Through this area, I represent a number of workforce development programs, including career and technical centers, and a handful of community colleges. As you mentioned in your testimony, we must "ensure our nation's system of education and workforce development can provide the skills that individuals will need to succeed in our ever-changing economy." I could not agree more with you. As co-chair of the House bipartisan Career and Education Caucus, I am strong advocate for CTE programs that provide learners of all ages with career-ready skills. In fact, I introduced a resolution last week recognizing February as National CTE Month. This resolution shines a light on the benefits of a skills-based education and the valuable contributions CTE students make to the American workforce. In your testimony, you mentioned expanding Pell grants to cover short-term programs. I appreciate you specifically mentioning the Promoting Employment and Lifelong Learning or PELL Act, which I am proud to support. In order for our workforce to keep up with our nation's dynamic needs, we must give students the tools align their educational opportunities to career advancement. And the PELL Act does just that.

- Can you further expand on what Louisiana is doing to ensure students who enter short-term programs are able to find job placement upon graduation?

Answer: Thank you for the question! Your question demonstrates a point that I believe is critical as an underpinning the entire issue. Education across the last three hundred years has changed in terms of its purpose as the nation now requires (economically) that people must get some form of education or skills beyond high school to make a living. And the

job and the subsequent career, is the broader goal of every student. Overall, 94-96% of graduates of a short-term credential at our colleges show up in the wage data file here in Louisiana. And we also know that students who complete these short-term credentials earn on average about \$48,500. In fact, these graduates out earn our credit graduates by about \$4-5,000 in first year earnings. Bottom line is that students who complete these credentials have a path to the middle class. But that first credential simply gets you in the door. Additional education and training will determine that graduates career trajectory.

Our work around ensuring job placement scraps the old notion that we produce a class of graduates and then show them off to prospective employers. If we wait until this point, we have missed a huge opportunity. Our work with industry partners begins long before we offer a class. The class and its content is largely a discussion with industry partners. As such, when employers see a graduate from a program, they know from their work in partnership with the college the skills the graduate has. Further, the classes often involve an earn-while-you-learn component that gives employers even further evidence of the quality of our graduates. Finally, in an effort to ensure continuous alignment of program offerings to the job market, we have adopted a star rating system that analyzes program offerings and graduate outcomes. The system rates occupation by demand and earnings. The start rating system has five stars with one star being the lowest demand and earnings. Five star is the highest demand and earnings. This approach allows policy makers like Board members to have a quantitative measure of programmatic performance on behalf of the student.

Congresswoman Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR)

Dr. Monty Sullivan:

1. Dr. Sullivan, how can we cut red tape and simplify the process for a worker who wants to enroll in a skills-development program offered through a local employer or aligned with an in-demand job?

Answer: College or education/training obtained regardless of the source should be easy. As a nation, we still have about 37.5% of our adults 25-64 not participating in the workforce. A portion of this challenge is precisely because of the arduous processes in place to access education and training programs.

Today, all too often getting into the program may be more difficult than the education and skills needed to pass the class. We collectively can cut the red tape by scrapping some of the old standards such as the 16-week semester, or the production model as outlined in the response to question 1 above. Successful completion of the FAFSA is arguably grounds for demonstrated college level skill and education. The point: completion of the FAFSA should result in institutions providing prospective students with a postsecondary credential. Why do we continue to place the highest bureaucratic hurdle in front of students with the least skillset and resources to accomplish the work. If our intent is truly to educate and skill every American, then we need to

seriously discontinue all of the multitude of “qualifying” for benefits. One example, if you qualify for Medicaid as determined by the Louisiana Department of Health, why should that student need to “requalify” for benefits. Allow the benefits test that has already been cleared to accomplish that bureaucratic step. Bottom line, if an American wants to go to get additional education and skills, shouldn’t we be working to get them there with fewer hurdles, not more.

2. Dr. Sullivan, what is Louisiana doing to ensure that short-term workforce programs are staying relevant to industry needs, and how quickly can these programs react when there is a shift in the economy?

Answer: In an effort to ensure continuous alignment of program offerings to the job market, we have adopted a star rating system that analyzes program offerings and graduate outcomes. The system rates occupation by demand and earnings. The star rating system has five stars with one star being the lowest demand and earnings. Five star is the highest demand and earnings. This approach allows policy makers like Board members to have a quantitative measure of programmatic performance on behalf of the student.

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3. Dr. Sullivan, working families dream of financial stability and building generational wealth for their kids and grandkids. It sounds like short-term workforce programs provide a solid foundation for those dreams. Have you seen that unfold in the lives of your former students?

Answer: As a nation, we have sixty-four million working-age adults with a high school diploma or less. This group is largely marginalized and trapped in an economy that they can only see and cannot be a part of. In order to join this economy, this population needs education and skills that will allow them to go to work and take care of their family- the first step toward joining America’s middle class.

The job, and the subsequent career, is the broader goal of every student. We need everyone to understand that role and responsibility. Students do not attend our colleges to “find themselves.” Instead, they attend our colleges to find a better life. And a job and career are central to that goal. Overall, 94-96% of graduates of a short-term credential at our colleges show up in the wage data file here in Louisiana. And we also know that students who complete these short-term credentials earn on average about \$48,500. In fact, these graduates out earn our credit graduates by about \$4-5,000 in first year earnings. Bottom line is that students who complete these credentials have a

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