



Testimony by Christy Moreno

Parent of a high school student and a college freshman
National Organizing Director, National Parents Union

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee Hearing:

“Opening Doors to Opportunity: The Promise of Expanded School Choice and Alternatives to Four-Year College Degrees”

September 17, 2025

Chairman Eric Burlison and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony today. My name is Christy Moreno, and I am a resident of Kansas City, Missouri, a parent, and an advocate for high-quality education for our youth. I champion parent and caregiver engagement in education and have a direct connection to hundreds of parents across the nation through my work with the National Parents Union. I appreciate this forum for citizen engagement and the chance to provide input on the legislative measures under consideration.

Introduction

I would like to preface my testimony by expressing the gratitude I feel for the democratic principles that make hearings like this possible. The right to be heard and to participate in the decision-making process is a foundation of good governance. The issue before us today, *“Opening Doors to Opportunity: The Promise of Expanded School Choice and Alternatives to Four-Year College Degrees,”* impacts not only policy but the very fabric of our society, including my very own family. My testimony will focus on three main points: navigating the process of attending college and college preparedness, the challenges students and parents face

given financial circumstances, and opportunities to improve college access and affordability for families.

Navigating The Process of Attending College and College Preparedness

We live in a time when school systems face enormous challenges in terms of preparing students both academically and with college knowledge to make successful transitions after high school. Successfully staffing college and career counselor positions that are critical to ensuring high school students have the resources and financial means to access higher education and other career pathways has not been a priority for many educational institutions.

As a parent of two children, ages 15 and 18, I have experienced first-hand the lack of adequate guidance and support from their school staff and administrators in engaging us as a family in these critical conversations, and it has left us figuring things out on our own with very limited experience and only general guidance that has not been helpful and does not fit our family's needs. For years, we have received institutional promotional and recruitment materials that create a sense of excitement and hope for post-secondary experiences, but that by no means take the place of having student and family support that is individualized and in alignment with the strengths and interests of my children. I strongly relate to the many parents and caregivers who think our K-12 schools need to do much better in preparing students academically for college and other after-high-school options that may be available to them. My 10th-grade child feels lost and has no sense of direction as to what the future may hold, given the lack of professional guidance and realistic opportunities presented at school.

The Challenges Students and Parents Face Given Financial Circumstances

The financial hardships many families across the nation are facing are having an impact on the decision to pursue higher education and alternative career pathways. Parents like me are finding it increasingly challenging to afford to fund our children's dreams and aspirations. I am the head of household with a full-time job and run a small business, and my college daughter has a full-time job, a part-time job, and a full load of college classes. Because higher education is not currently affordable, my daughter will remain at home so that we can manage expenses more effectively. She is missing out on the traditional college experience of living independently and learning to manage her own expenses. We are having to find ways to adapt to the economic stressors while continuing to support her academic and skillset development so she can become the productive member of society she wishes to be.

As of last year, my property taxes' monthly payment alone went up by about \$350. I've had to take on more work to close this gap, but the gap keeps getting wider as the cost of basic necessities keeps rising. When I was my daughter's age, college accessibility and affordability were not an issue for my parents, who lacked a college degree. I find it heartbreaking that even with my college degree and profession, I now find myself overextending my capacity to ensure we can continue to fund her education, because she is having to help as well. I am one of the

45+% of parents in a national parent poll by the National Parents Union who have said that it's somewhat challenging to send our kids to college. I also identify with the 55% of parents of a high school student with a college savings account; however, that account will only be able to fund one and a half semesters of college at the outrageously high costs we experience today.

Opportunities to Improve College Access and Affordability for Families

I stand with the 58% of parents and caregivers who believe that a 4-year college experience for my children is worth the investment. As a mother, I am committed to doing the possible and seemingly impossible to see my children thrive and become who they deserve to be, and that is independent individuals, fulfilled professionals, and citizens who are actively contributing to the betterment of this society. Improving the affordability of post-secondary education is critical for families across this country. I am with the 89% of parents nationwide who overwhelmingly support increasing Pell Grant funding, and the 60+% who would like to see loan repayment plan options that fit our financial situation.

Conclusion

In closing, I commend the subcommittee for addressing an issue that lies at the heart of our nation's future. Higher education, alternative career pathways, and career preparedness are more than a desire—they are critical to the development of a dignified society and a globally competitive economic force. The choices you make as legislators will shape the opportunities available for generations to come. Our country is strongest when all parents' voices are heard and when all children and youth have a clear and prosperous path forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story and the pressures and concerns that many fellow parents I work with have expressed. I look forward to a time when we all come together to put our hardworking families first.

Respectfully submitted,

Christy Moreno

National Organizing Director

National Parents Union

christy@npunion.org