

Maine System will lose a vital resource in support of their higher education goals. Public universities already struggle to provide sufficient financial aid to students, especially the lower and middle class who currently benefit from this program.

Eliminating the Perkins Loan Program will either force students to borrow through less desirable loan programs, or universities to make even more difficult cuts in an attempt to fund the gap from the loss of this program.

I sincerely hope that the students enrolled at all of the institutions in the University of Maine System, and all across the state, can count on your support of this vitally important and proven program. Also, I hope you can help facilitate a budget solution that does not impact funding in other critical areas relating to higher education and other federal loan programs.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time and we appreciate your hard work and support.

Sincerely,

JAMES H. PAGE,

Chancellor, University of Maine System.

Ms. COLLINS. Again, I want to commend my colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, Senator PORTMAN, and my colleague from Wisconsin who has been a leader on this issue as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

AIRPORT AND AIRWAY EXTENSION ACT OF 2015

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3614, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3614) to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 3614) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

TSA OFFICE OF INSPECTION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

FEDERAL PERKINS LOAN PROGRAM

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, much attention has appropriately been focused upon our next 36 hours in the

Congress. A lot of attention—again, appropriately—focused on whether there would be a government shutdown for failure to pass a continuing resolution. Now we believe that is, hopefully, going to be avoided.

In just under 36 hours, there are a number of other vital programs that will expire, lapse, or sunset if this Congress does not take appropriate action. I am here to join my colleagues, Senator COLLINS and, in a moment, Senator AYOTTE, to call attention to one of those critical programs, one of those vital programs, and that is the Federal Perkins Loan Program, the authorization of which will expire in less than 36 hours if we do not take collective action in this body.

I am here today to call on our colleagues across the aisle to join me in supporting the extension of the Federal Perkins Loan Program. Already we have seen encouraging bipartisan support for the program here in the Senate. The Presiding Officer, Senator COLLINS, Senator KIRK, Senator AYOTTE, and just today Senator THUNE have all joined me and more than 20 Democrats last week in submitting a resolution highlighting the importance of the Federal Perkins Loan Program and urging its extension.

Yesterday our colleagues in the House of Representatives unanimously passed a measure that would extend the program for 1 year. I am hoping this body will do exactly the same. While I look forward to a broader conversation about improving Federal support for students as we look to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, we simply cannot sit idly by and watch the Federal Perkins Loan Program expire as America's students are left with such uncertainty.

Since 1958, the Federal Perkins Loan Program has been successful in helping Americans access affordable higher education with low-interest loans for students who cannot borrow or afford more expensive private student loans. In my home State of Wisconsin, the program provides more than 20,000 low-income students with more than \$41 million in aid. The impact of this program isn't just isolated to the Badger State. In fact, the Federal Perkins Loan Program aids over one-half million students with financial need each year, across 1,500 institutions of higher education. The schools originate, service, and collect the fixed-interest-rate loans. What is more, institutions maintain loans available for future students through a revolving fund.

Since the program's creation, institutions have invested millions of dollars of their own funds into the program. In addition to making higher education accessible for low-income students, the program serves as an incentive for people who wish to go into public service as careers by offering targeted loan cancellations for specific professions in areas of high national needs, such as teaching, nursing, and law enforcement.

As a Member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and as a U.S. Senator representing a State with a rich history of investment in cherishing of higher education, it is a top priority for me to fight to ensure the Federal Perkins Loan Program continues for generations to come.

I am fighting for students like Benjamin Wooten. Benjamin is a 2004 UW-Madison graduate and a small business owner from Genoa, WI, whose family fell on hard times while he was attending school. Ben shared with me:

The fact that I did not have to pay interest while I was in school was a huge help to me. I was attending school full time, working and trying to live on a meager budget. . . . I am a grateful and successful small business owner. I paid my loan off in full about a year ago with pride and excitement. I know that when I repaid my loan it was returned to a revolving fund and will be lent back out to other students in need.

I am also fighting for students like Brittany McAdams. Brittany is a medical school student with a passion for pediatrics and helping the most vulnerable among us—something that doesn't always yield a significant paycheck, especially in comparison to some of her medical school peers. Brittany said:

I want to be able to treat patients from all socioeconomic levels, despite their ability to pay. In other words, I want to do important work for less money than most other physicians. . . . The Perkins Loan is so valuable because it does not collect interest while we are in school. To me, that says the government believes that what I am doing with my life is important. That our country needs more doctors willing to tackle primary care. That while we need to pay for our graduate degrees, that they are going to do their part to make it just a bit easier. The Perkins Loan makes me feel valued and respected and even more passionate about my work.

Finally, I am here today fighting for students like Nayeli Spahr. Nayeli was raised by a single immigrant mother who worked two full-time jobs. She attended 10 different schools in 3 different States before she finished high school. Without the Federal Perkins Loan Program, Nayeli said that her opportunity to get a college education would have been "an illusory dream."

Today, Nayeli is the first in her family to finish college and is now in her last year of medical school and is planning to work with those who are underserved in our urban communities. She finished by telling me:

The Perkins loan program helped me reach this point. And, its existence is essential to provide that opportunity for other young adults wanting to believe in themselves and to empower their communities to be better. Please save it.

You don't have to look very far to find the significant impact of the Federal Perkins Loan Program—the significant impact that it has on America's students. There are thousands of stories like the few that I just shared, representing thousands and thousands of students who are still benefiting from the opportunities provided to them by this hugely successful program. Let's show the American people