

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

July 9, 2014

Congressman John Kline
Chairman
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman George Miller
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller,

On behalf of Excelsior College, I am writing in strong support of the modified version of H.R. 3136, the Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act, which the committee is considering. The original legislation was introduced by Congressman Matt Salmon, Congressman Jared Polis, and Congresswoman Susan Brooks.

Founded as Regents College in 1971 by the State of New York and chartered as a private, nonprofit institution in 1998, the College was renamed Excelsior College in 2001. Excelsior College is a non-profit, accredited institution that is recognized leader in removing obstacles to degree attainment for adult learners. We provide affordable access to higher education through multiple avenues to degree completion.

As we look at the biggest issues affecting higher education in the United States, we are faced with issues of access and affordability. Implemented properly, competency-based education promises to address several of the key challenges facing higher education by increasing efficiency and reducing costs, improving our ability to measure learning outcomes, and shortening time to degree completion.

Many of today's higher education regulations, with their focus on measuring time, do not support competency-based education. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 did include a provision for competency-based education, but each program must be approved on an exception basis. This is a deterrent to institutions trying to develop competency-based programs because getting approval is costly and time-consuming -- only two institutions have successfully completed the approval process to date. Further, this process is for approval of final programs and does not support experimentation.

A demonstration program for competency-based education will allow the Department of Education to waive current regulations, allowing selected institutions to experiment with ways to measure learning and administer federal financial aid based on learning outcomes. This demonstration project can then inform Congress of the changes needed in the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which will support real change and innovation in higher education while preserving academic integrity.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you to establish and participate in a Competency-Based Education Demonstration Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. F. Ebersole", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

John F. Ebersole, LPD
President
Excelsior College