119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to make technical improvements to the Net Price Calculator system so that prospective students may have a more accurate understanding of the true cost of college.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

———————————————

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself and Ms. SMITH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

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A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to make technical improvements to the Net Price Calculator system so that prospective students may have a more accurate understanding of the true cost of college.

1   *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*

2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4   This Act may be cited as the "Net Price Calculator

5 Improvement Act".

1   **SEC. 2. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR NET PRICE CALCULA-**

2   **TORS.**

3   Section 132(h) of the Higher Education Act of 1965

4   (20 U.S.C. 1015a(h)) is amended—

5   (1) by redesignating paragraph (4) as para-

6   graph (6);

7   (2) in paragraph (2), by inserting before the pe-

8   riod ", and, not later than 1 year after the date of

9   enactment of the Net Price Calculator Improvement

10   Act, shall meet the requirements of paragraph

11   (4)(C)";

12   (3) in paragraph (3), by inserting after the first

13   sentence the following: "Not later than 1 year after

14   the date of enactment of the Net Price Calculator

15   Improvement Act, such calculator shall meet the re-

16   quirements of paragraph (4)."; and

17   (4) by inserting after paragraph (3) the fol-

18   lowing:

19   "(4) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR NET PRICE

20   CALCULATORS.—Not later than 1 year after the date

21   of enactment of the Net Price Calculator Improve-

22   ment Act, a net price calculator for an institution of

23   higher education shall, at a minimum, meet the fol-

24   lowing requirements:

25   "(A) The link for the calculator—

3

1   "(i) is clearly labeled as a 'net price
2   calculator' and prominently, clearly, and
3   conspicuously (in such size and contrast
4   (such as shade) that it is readily noticeable
5   and readable) posted in locations on the in-
6   stitution's website where information on
7   costs and aid is provided (such as financial
8   aid, prospective students, or tuition and
9   fees web pages);
10   "(ii) matches in size and font to the
11   other prominent links on the primary
12   menu; and
13   "(iii) may also be included on the in-
14   stitution's compliance web page, which
15   contains information relating to compliance
16   with Federal, State, and local laws.
17   "(B) The input screen for the net price
18 calculator displays a chart of the net prices for
19 students receiving Federal student financial aid
20 under title IV (as required by subsection (i)(5))
21 for the most recent academic year for which
22 data are available, disaggregated by income cat-
23 egories.
24   "(C) The results screen for the calculator
25 specifies the following information:

1   "(i) The individual net price (as cal-
2   culated under paragraph (2)) for the indi-
3   vidual student, which is the most visually
4   prominent figure on the results screen, in-
5   cluding a statement of—

6   "(I) the year for which the net
7   price applies; and

8   "(II) the year from which the
9   data was used to determine that net
10   price.

11   "(ii) Cost of attendance, including—

12   "(I) the total estimated cost for a
13   student to complete the program of
14   study, based on normal time for com-
15   pletion of, or graduation from, the
16   student's particular program of study;

17   "(II) the total annual cost of at-
18   tendance;

19   "(III) annual tuition and fees;

20   "(IV) average annual cost of
21   room and board for the institution for
22   a first-time, full-time undergraduate
23   student enrolled in the institution;

24   "(V) average annual cost of
25   books and supplies for a first-time,

1   full-time undergraduate student en-

2   rolled in the institution;

3   ''(VI) estimated annual cost of

4   other expenses (including personal ex-

5   penses and transportation) for a first-

6   time, full-time undergraduate student

7   enrolled in the institution; and

8   ''(VII) a statement of—

9   ''(aa) the year for which

10   each cost described in this clause

11   applies; and

12   ''(bb) the year from which

13   the data was used to determine

14   each cost described in this clause.

15   ''(iii) Estimated total need-based

16   grant aid and merit-based grant aid, from

17   Federal, State, and institutional sources

18   that may be available to the individual stu-

19   dent, showing the subtotal for each cat-

20   egory and the total of all sources of grant

21   aid and disaggregated by academic year

22   for normal time for completion of, or grad-

23   uation from, the student's particular pro-

24   gram of study.

1   "(iv) Percentage of the first-time, full-

2   time undergraduate students enrolled in

3   the institution who received any type of

4   grant aid described in clause (iii),

5   disaggregated by their first year and sub-

6   sequent years of enrollment up to the num-

7   ber of years for normal completion of, or

8   graduation from, their particular program

9   of study.

10   "(v) The disclaimer described in para-

11   graph (6).

12   "(vi) In the case of a calculator

13   that—

14   "(I) includes questions to esti-

15   mate a student's (or prospective stu-

16   dent's) eligibility for veterans' edu-

17   cation benefits (as defined in section

18   480) or educational benefits for active

19   duty service members, such benefits

20   are displayed on the results screen in

21   a manner that clearly distinguishes

22   them from the grant aid described in

23   clause (iii); or

24   "(II) does not include questions

25   to estimate eligibility for the benefits

1   described in subclause (I), the results

2   screen—

3   "(aa) indicates that certain

4   students (or prospective stu-

5   dents) may qualify for such bene-

6   fits;

7   "(bb) states why the institu-

8   tion is not including questions to

9   estimate a student's eligibility for

10   such benefits; and

11   "(cc) includes a link to an

12   appropriate Federal website that

13   provides information about such

14   benefits.

15   "(D) The institution populates the calcu-

16   lator with data from not earlier than 2 aca-

17   demic years prior to the most recent academic

18   year.

19   "(5) PROHIBITION ON USE OF DATA COL-

20   LECTED BY THE NET PRICE CALCULATOR.—A net

21   price calculator for an institution of higher edu-

22   cation shall—

23   "(A) clearly indicate which questions are

24   required to be completed for an estimate of the

25   net price from the calculator;

1   "(B) in the case of a calculator that re-

2   quests contact information from users, clearly

3   mark such requests as 'optional';

4   "(C) prohibit any personally identifiable in-

5   formation provided by users from being sold or

6   made available to third parties; and

7   "(D) clearly state 'Any information that

8   you provide on this site is confidential. The Net

9   Price Calculator does not store your responses

10   or require personal identifying information of

11   any kind.'.".

12 **SEC. 3. UNIVERSAL NET PRICE CALCULATOR.**

13   Section 132(h) of the Higher Education Act of 1965

14 (20 U.S.C. 1015a(h)), as amended by section 2, is further

15 amended by adding at the end the following:

16   "(7) UNIVERSAL NET PRICE CALCULATOR.—

17   "(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may

18   develop a universal net price calculator that is

19   housed within the Department of Education,

20   with Department branding, and that may be

21   based on or utilize an existing platform devel-

22   oped by a public or private entity, that—

23   "(i) enables users to answer 1 set of

24   questions and receive net prices for any in-

1 stitution that is required to have a net

2 price calculator under this subsection;

3   "(ii) provides the information required

4 under subparagraphs (C) and (D) of para-

5 graph (4) for each institution for which a

6 net price is being sought;

7   "(iii) is developed in consultation with

8 the heads of relevant Federal agencies; and

9   "(iv) before being finalized and pub-

10 licly released, is tested in accordance with

11 subparagraph (B).

12   "(B) CONSUMER TESTING.—

13   "(i) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary

14   develops a universal net price calculator

15   under subparagraph (A), the Secretary, in

16   consultation with the heads of relevant

17   Federal agencies, shall establish a process

18   to submit the universal net price calculator

19   developed under this paragraph for con-

20   sumer testing among representatives of

21   students (including low-income students,

22   first generation college students, adult stu-

23   dents, and prospective students), students'

24   families (including low-income families,

25   families with first generation college stu-

10

1   dents, and families with prospective stu-

2   dents), institutions of higher education,

3   secondary school and postsecondary coun-

4   selors, and nonprofit consumer groups.

5   "(ii) LENGTH OF CONSUMER TEST-

6   ING.—The Secretary shall ensure that the

7   consumer testing lasts no longer than 6

8   months after the process for consumer

9   testing is developed under clause (i).

10   "(iii) USE OF RESULTS.—The results

11   of consumer testing under clause (i) shall

12   be used in the final development of the

13   universal net price calculator.

14   "(iv) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—

15   Not later than 3 months after the date the

16   consumer testing under clause (i) con-

17   cludes, the Secretary shall submit to Con-

18   gress the final universal net price calcu-

19   lator and a report detailing the results of

20   such testing, including whether the Sec-

21   retary added any additional items to the

22   calculator as a result of such testing.

23   "(v) AUTHORITY TO MODIFY.—The

24   Secretary may modify the definitions,

25   terms, formatting, and design of the uni-

1   versal net price calculator based on the re-

2   sults of consumer testing required under

3   this paragraph and before finalizing the

4   calculator.

5   "(8) REPORT FROM SECRETARY.—Not later

6   than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Net

7   Price Calculator Improvement Act, the Secretary

8   shall submit a report to Congress on steps taken to

9   raise awareness of net price calculators among pro-

10   spective students and families, particularly among

11   students in middle school and high school and stu-

12   dents from low-income families.".