

2019 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 96

BY REPRESENTATIVE FALCONER

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Board of Regents, in collaboration with the public postsecondary education management boards, to conduct a study of student debt relief measures, nationally and statewide, and to submit a written report of findings and conclusions, including recommendations for legislation relative to debt as a barrier to reenrollment for those who have completed some postsecondary education, to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than thirty days prior to the beginning of the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature.

WHEREAS, forty-seven percent of working-age Louisianians, more than one million persons, hold a high school diploma or less as their highest level of education, meaning nearly half of the state's working-age population is at risk of not meeting the demands of the twenty-first century workforce; this often results in Louisianians being unemployed or underemployed and in need of new educational opportunities to advance and thrive; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Regents has set a goal of doubling the number of adults in Louisiana with a meaningful, market-ready postsecondary education credential by the year 2030; doubling the number of annual credential recipients represents reaching an educational attainment level of sixty percent and will require Louisiana to move from producing approximately forty thousand credentials in 2019 to eighty-five thousand in 2030; and

WHEREAS, this goal will demand that the Louisiana postsecondary education community and its partners implement new strategies to reach and successfully reengage all potential student populations, with an emphasis on working-age adults; and

WHEREAS, student debt is a major barrier to adult student reenrollment and degree completion; many students struggle to afford the growing cost of postsecondary education and are unable to complete their education because of financial challenges; and

WHEREAS, an outstanding balance may lead to registration and transcript holds, which can discourage students from remaining on the pathway to degree completion while also preventing some students from reenrolling or transferring to another institution to complete a degree; and

WHEREAS, a decade of disinvestment has radically reduced state support for Louisiana's colleges and universities and shifted the funding burden to students and their parents; as a result, postsecondary education institutions are more reliant on self-generated revenue, including student tuition and fees, to operate; therefore, a reasonable approach to minimizing student debt and addressing debt relief for adult students must be considered.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Board of Regents, in collaboration with the public postsecondary education management boards, to conduct a study of student debt relief measures, nationally and statewide, and to submit a written report of findings and conclusions, including recommendations for legislation relative to debt as a barrier to reenrollment for those who have completed some postsecondary education, to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than thirty days prior to the beginning of the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such report shall include findings and recommendations relative to establishing a student tuition relief and engagement program that shall provide for the following:

(1) Identification and examination of successful programs nationally and within the state, including pertinent background material, data, an inventory of existing programs, and recognized best practices that may serve as models for a statewide program in Louisiana, including:

(a) An analysis of the cost of attendance by institution, state support per student, financial aid from nonstate sources, and population-based metrics to better understand affordability and student cost options.

(b) A recommendation for policy steps to improve public postsecondary education affordability in Louisiana and maximize federal and state financial aid to both traditional and nontraditional student populations, including:

(i) The development of a method of informing students of their estimated current student loan indebtedness for the purposes of planning prior to students incurring additional debt for each upcoming academic term.

(ii) The development of a method of informing students of the average wages earnable in careers that align with their selected programs or majors and the estimated numbers of regional and statewide job openings and placement rates for such careers.

(iii) The development of a proposal related to debt mitigation, debt relief, or payment deferrals using the expertise of the office of debt recovery within the Department of Revenue, the office of the attorney general, and the public postsecondary education management boards and institutions to develop and implement a student tuition relief program in Louisiana.

(iv) An estimate of costs associated with the implementation of such a program and identification of potential funding sources to sustain the program.

(2) A plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Board of Regents, the commissioner of higher education, and the chairman of each public postsecondary education management board.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE