

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 4568

To amend the definition of professional student in the Higher Education  
Act of 1965.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 19, 2026

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. WICKER, Ms. LUMMIS, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and  
Ms. COLLINS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and re-  
ferred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To amend the definition of professional student in the Higher  
Education Act of 1965.

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 “Nursing is a Profes-  
5       sional Degree Act”.

6       **SEC. 2. PROFESSIONAL STUDENT AND PROFESSIONAL DE-**  
7       **GREE DEFINED.**

8       Section 455(a)(4)(C) of the Higher Education Act of  
9       1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(a)(4)(C)) is amended—

(1) in clause (ii), by striking “, as defined under section 668.2 of title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this paragraph),”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(iii) PROFESSIONAL DEGREE.—In this paragraph, the term ‘professional degree’ —

“(I) means a degree that signifies both completion of the academic requirements for beginning practice in a given profession (for which professional licensure is also commonly required), and a level of professional skill beyond that normally required for a bachelor’s degree; and

“(II) includes each of the following:

“(aa) Pharmacy  
(Pharm.D.).

“(bb) Dentistry (D.D.S. or  
D.M.D.).

“(cc) Veterinary Medicine  
(D.V.M.).

1 “(dd) Chiropractic (D.C. or  
2 D.C.M.).

3 “(ee) Law (L.L.B. or J.D.).

4 “(ff) Medicine (M.D.).

5 “(gg) Optometry (O.D.).

6 “(hh) Osteopathic Medicine  
7 or Osteopathy (D.O.).

8 “(ii) Podiatric Medicine or  
9 Podiatry (D.P.M., D.P., or  
10 Pod.D.).

11 “(jj) Theology or Theo-  
12 logical Studies (M.Div. or  
13 M.H.L.).

14 “(kk) Clinical Psychology  
15 (Psy.D. or Ph.D.).

16 “(ll) Nursing (MSN, DNP,  
17 DNAP, or Ph.D.).

18 “(mm) Any other degree  
19 that meets the requirements of  
20 subclause (I), as determined by  
21 the Secretary.”.

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