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COMMUNICATION FROM THE
CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, November 14, 2024.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on November 14, 2024, at 4:20 p.m.

That the Senate passed S. 1316.

That the Senate passed S. 4716.

That the Senate passed S. 5314.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 5464.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 5861.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 6324.

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 7333.

Appointments:

The National Council on Disability
United States Semiquincentennial Commission

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

KEVIN MCCUMBER,
Acting Clerk.

FAFSA DEADLINE ACT

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1568, I call up the bill (H.R. 8932) to establish an earlier application processing cycle for the FAFSA, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1568, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Education and the Workforce, printed in the bill, is adopted, and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 8932

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “FAFSA Deadline Act”.

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLIER APPLICATION PROCESSING CYCLE.

Section 483(d)(4) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1090(d)(4)) is amended by striking “not later than January 1 of the applicant’s planned year of enrollment, to the maximum extent practicable, on or around October 1 prior to the applicant’s planned year of enrollment” and inserting “not later than October 1 prior to the applicant’s planned year of enrollment”.

SEC. 3. CERTIFICATION AND TESTIMONY REQUIREMENTS.

Section 483(d)(4) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1090(d)(4)) is further amended—

(1) by striking “The Secretary” and inserting the following:

*“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary”; and
(2) by adding at the end the following:*

“(B) CERTIFICATION AND TESTIMONY REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall, with respect to each application processing cycle, prior to the initiation of such processing cycle—

“(i) on a date that is not later than September 1—

“(I) certify to the authorizing committees that the Department will meet the October 1 deadline specified in subparagraph (A) for such processing cycle; or

“(II) certify to such committees that the Department will not meet such deadline; and

“(ii) in the case of a certification described in clause (i)(II), on a date that is not later than September 30, testify before the authorizing committees on—

“(I) the anticipated failure to meet such deadline; and

“(II) the financial impact such failure will have on students and families.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill, as amended, shall be debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member on the Committee on Education and the Workforce or their respective designees.

The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 8932.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act, and I start by highlighting the critical role the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, plays in the lives of many American students and families. For them, FAFSA isn’t just a form, it is a path to postsecondary education.

In recent years, bipartisan efforts were made to simplify this complex, daunting process. The FAFSA Simplification Act, passed in 2020, was intended to make applying for financial aid more accessible and less overwhelming. That is what this country needs, an effective, user-friendly system that lowers barriers to education and increases access for students of all backgrounds.

Unfortunately, we are here because the Biden-Harris administration is failing to provide this vital tool to the very students and families it was designed to help. Instead of the smooth rollout we planned, the Biden-Harris administration’s execution of the new simplified FAFSA has led to widespread frustration, delays, and costly errors.

Imagine being a high school senior working hard to qualify for scholar-

ships and planning your future, only to be met with glitches, incomplete forms, and endless processing errors. That was the reality for too many students.

Last year, the Department of Education delayed the FAFSA release until late December, 3 full months after its recommended October 1 release date, due to administrative incompetence.

The soft launch that followed was chaotic, resulting in millions of errors and little clarity regarding the form’s actual functionality. Delays in the Department’s failure to communicate effectively left families in a state of uncertainty, scrambling to understand what aid they would receive, or even if they would receive aid at all.

As we sit here, the FAFSA is delayed for a second straight year, and some capabilities are still unavailable, forcing students, schools, and State agencies to wait again.

The FAFSA Deadline Act introduced by Representative ERIN HOUGHIN is the answer. This legislation seeks to hold the Department of Education accountable by requiring the FAFSA to be available by October 1 each year, and it does so with broad, bipartisan support. The bill passed through committee 34-6, sending a clear signal that both sides of the aisle believe families deserve better.

In short, today’s conversation is about restoring the promise of FAFSA, fulfilling our obligation to students, and making sure the Department’s failure is not a new normal.

It is our job to ensure that the Department of Education rolls out FAFSA each year with clear timelines and accurate data so American families can rely on this process.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a “yes” vote on the FAFSA Deadline Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act, which would set a firm October 1 deadline for the Department of Education to roll out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, form starting in 2025. This bill will help millions of students and families access Federal financial aid in a timely manner.

We know that higher education is a pathway to opportunity, but the rising cost of college has made it out of reach for a lot of students. Federal student aid, including Pell grants and student loans, is essential to making college affordable.

That is why in 2020, I worked with Senator Lamar Alexander to pass the FAFSA Simplification Act, to make Federal student aid easier to access.

Regrettably, last year, technical problems with the newly redesigned FAFSA form delayed the students’ access to this vital aid, and as a result, too many students could not submit their applications on time, and many

struggled to get the support they need to resolve those issues.

When the committee first considered this bill in July, I voted in opposition because I had serious concerns that the implementation deadline may have forced the Department of Education to roll out an incomplete form on October 1 of this year. However, because we are now considering the bill after October 1, the deadline will apply next year, 2025, and that gives the Department ample time to make improvements and fix any lingering issues.

We now have helpful information from the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office that provided specific recommendations in how the Department can continue to improve the rollout and implementation of FAFSA.

H.R. 8932 sets a clear, firm deadline for rolling out FAFSA while still giving the Department of Education time to ensure the application functions properly for all students. The bill strikes a balance between ensuring timely access to financial aid and not compromising the quality of the application process.

We have made significant progress in simplifying the FAFSA and expanding financial aid in recent years. According to the Department of Education, despite the ongoing FAFSA challenges, roughly half a million more students received a Pell grant this year than last year due primarily to the changes in the formulas used.

Under the leadership of President Biden and congressional Democrats, the maximum Pell grant has increased by \$900 over the last several years, giving students additional financial support to cover college costs. This bill will help ensure that even more students have the information they need in a timelier manner to access Pell grants and other vital student aid.

Mr. Speaker, I support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. HOUCHIN), the author of the bill.

Mrs. HOUCHIN. Mr. Speaker, as the mother of two college students, I am all too familiar with the concerns voiced by the nearly 18 million students and their families who attempted to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid this year and who are dreading a failed rollout again this year.

I am here today to speak on their behalf.

I am especially frustrated considering the Department of Education has had 3 years to simplify the FAFSA as Congress has dictated.

This clear misplacement of priorities led the 2024 FAFSA to be delayed by 3 months with continuous technical issues. A scathing report from the Government Accountability Office found not only did the Biden-Harris Department of Education repeatedly fail to release FAFSA, when they finally released it, it didn't work. Then they left

millions of calls from American families unanswered. Three-quarters of calls to the Department of Education about the broken FAFSA were not answered, and when they did answer the phone, they told parents to just keep trying.

It is as if we need to take the Department of Education, unplug it, plug it back in, and hope that it might work, but it is not going to. They are still unprepared.

The Department of Education has already failed students again this year with the expectation that the form will now again be 2 months late.

My bill, the FAFSA Deadline Act, sets a firm October 1 deadline to publish FAFSA consistent with what has been expected for years.

Thankfully, this wasn't an issue under President Trump. We can look forward to prioritizing FAFSA once again in this next administration.

It is imperative that we do not allow this to become precedent and that we work together to make sure that American families are taken care of when applying for the FAFSA.

We want this program to work. We want to make sure that families that want to send their kids to college have the availability to do that and that the FAFSA is available and workable.

For parents and students across the country, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Mrs. LEE CARTER).

Mrs. LEE CARTER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act. I thank Chairwoman FOXX and Ranking Member SCOTT for their collaboration and efforts on this bill. I thank President Biden and Vice President HARRIS for working with the Department of Education and the great workers there to address the issues that occurred earlier.

This crucial legislation would set a firm October 1 deadline for the Department of Education to roll out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, form to ensure students' access to Federal student aid in a timely manner.

For many students, FAFSA is a gateway to realizing their dreams of higher education.

In 2022, financial aid through grants or loans provided vital support to over 700,000 undergraduates in Texas in my district.

At Lone Star College, 100 percent of students receive financial aid, while 97 percent receive it at Texas Southern University, 66 percent at the University of Houston, and 39 percent at Houston Community College benefited from these essential resources.

As the cost of college continues to rise, it is crucial that we provide students with every opportunity to apply for financial aid in a timely manner, ensuring their applications are processed without delay.

As a mother, and like many parents here today, I look forward to the implementation of this legislation, which represents more than a deadline. It is a commitment to ensuring that students and parents have access to the resources they need to pursue higher education.

Access to affordable education should not be hindered by delays, and setting this October 1 deadline is a crucial step to make the FAFSA process more predictable and accessible for millions of students and families across our country.

Let us help all students focus on their studies and pursue their academic goals leading to the American Dream today.

I urge and encourage all my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOOD).

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the FAFSA Deadline Act.

This legislation will formally set October 1 as the annual publication date for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.

A formal, set deadline will ensure that students, parents, and schools have adequate time to apply for, process, and evaluate their financial aid packages.

In 2023, instead of releasing the FAFSA on the traditional existing deadline of October 1, the Department of Education waited until the last possible moment and then published a faulty application that was 3 months late.

The next several months were spent fixing numerous technical issues, and this debacle led to a 12 percent reduction in the FAFSA form completion.

At least the Department of Education is consistent in their failures, however, as once again, this year they missed the October deadline from 45 days ago.

Before the incompetent and woke-obsessed Biden-Harris administration, Congress could depend on the Department of Education to do its job on time, but the Biden-Harris focus has been on the illegal student loan transfer scheme, rather than implementing the required programs.

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We need accountability to end this perpetual cycle of incompetence. I offered an amendment that is now included in the bill that requires the Department of Education to certify to Congress 1 month in advance whether or not the FAFSA form will, in fact, be ready by the October 1 deadline.

If the Department certifies in the negative or fails to certify at all, phase two of the accountability kicks in, and within the month, the Secretary of Education would have to testify before Congress regarding their latest failure to meet the deadline. In this testimony, the Secretary would be required

to provide details regarding the financial impact this delay will have on students that it is supposed to be serving.

When Congress sets a deadline, we expect it to be followed. If agencies can't meet that expectation, they need to explain why to the American people, and I hope Members from both parties who express disappointment, if not surprise, at the most recent FAFSA rollout can all join the ranking member, my friend from Virginia, in supporting this simple reform of the FAFSA Deadline Act.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that this year's FAFSA process was a debacle. However, we are missing part of the story if we don't at least mention the work the Department has already done to get FAFSA back on track. The college support strategy deployed experts to colleges across the country to help financial aid officers navigate the new processing system.

The system provided one-time grants to school districts, States, and non-profit organizations to scale up their ability to provide support to students. They had workshops, advising sessions, and media campaigns funded through the strategy to help produce a significant increase in FAFSA submissions throughout the summer.

Additionally, as the Department prepares for the launch of this year's FAFSA form, they are taking great strides in improving transparency and fixing technological issues.

I will include in the RECORD a document from the Department of Education titled: "A focus on Improving the FAFSA Experience: Updates, actions, and a path forward for the 2025-26 cycle." This document outlines 10 core areas to focus on, making improvements to the FAFSA process for both students and colleges.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, which says, in part, that "cementing an October launch date only addresses a piece of the puzzle; consistency is another. Students must be able to trust that the financial aid application process will function as intended and that they will receive clear communication along the way," and they wrote otherwise in support of the legislation.

[From NASFAA, July 10, 2024]

NASFAA STATEMENT ON FAFSA DEADLINE ACT

WASHINGTON, DC.—Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate have introduced a pair of bills that would ensure the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, is made available to students on October 1 each year, ahead of their planned year of enrollment.

The FAFSA form has typically been made available on October 1 each year since 2016, months earlier than the legally mandated January 1 launch date. This discrepancy between common practice and law came into play during this year's turbulent FAFSA rollout, during which the updated "Better

FAFSA" became available to students in a limited and incomplete fashion at the end of December 2023.

In response to this news, NASFAA Vice President of Public Policy & Federal Relations Karen McCarthy issued the following statement:

"Codifying the October 1 FAFSA launch date into law has been a top priority for NASFAA for many years because, when operating as intended, an earlier release date allows colleges and universities to provide financial aid information to students much sooner.

But cementing an October launch date only addresses a piece of the puzzle; consistency is another. Students must be able to trust that the financial aid application process will function as intended and that they will receive clear communication along the way.

This past year has shown us just how critical it is that all students are able to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible. Even today, there are aspects of the 2024-25 FAFSA system that are not yet functional or working as intended.

However, in the absence of a clear timeline or understanding from the Department of Education about when the entire FAFSA system will be available—including the application itself, the transfer of applicant data to schools, and the ability for applicants and schools to make corrections—forcing an October 1 deadline this year does not guarantee a fully functioning form, and may in fact work against efforts to release a product that has been tested and found to run smoothly. We need all stakeholders to work together in good faith to ensure this year's mistakes are not repeated.

We continue to urge the Department of Education to ensure that the entire FAFSA system is up and running as intended as soon as possible and at the same time the application goes live and to promptly communicate that timeline."

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter from The Hope Center at Temple University. They said: "Students and their families deserve a form that is available all hours of the day, for all types of applicants, and results in the swift transfer of their information to the States and colleges that will develop their financial aid packages."

They were "concerned that implementing a rigid deadline less than 3 months away will force additional technical issues for applicants. Therefore, we request that you amend H.R. 8932 to start the new deadline on October 1, 2025." That is exactly what we have done in this underlying bill.

THE HOPE CENTER,

July 9, 2024.

Hon. VIRGINIA FOXX,

Chairwoman, Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. BOBBY SCOTT,

Ranking Member, Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRWOMAN FOXX AND RANKING MEMBER SCOTT: The last nine months have been challenging for students and their families. Problems associated with implementing the overhaul of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) have created significant confusion, frustration, and uncertainty for many of those applying for the financial aid they need to succeed in college. Therefore, we thank your Committee for its

continued interest in getting the FAFSA back on track, especially for the upcoming 2025-26 cycle launching this fall. We write to comment on H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act.

In normal years, we agree that the FAFSA should be required to launch no later than nine months before the start of the next award year—or by October 1—a timeline now made possible with the use of prior-year tax data. Therefore, we have also joined in coalition requests to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) asking the agency to do everything possible to launch a fully functional FAFSA on time this year. However, it has become clear in recent weeks that ED continues to confront technical issues that could interrupt the usability of the 2025-26 FAFSA.

Students and their families deserve a form that is available at all hours of the day, for all types of applicants, and results in the swift transfer of their information to the states and colleges that will develop their aid packages. We must rebuild trust with applicants, college access professionals, and financial aid administrators, all of whom need to see a reliable FAFSA for them to have confidence in the entire system of financial aid.

Therefore, we believe it is preferable to have the 2025-26 FAFSA launch be slightly delayed but be fully functional, over an on-time October 1 launch that comes with technical issues and glitches, if such a tradeoff is at hand for the upcoming award year. After the 2025-26 cycle, we support an October 1 launch date requirement, but we are concerned that implementing a rigid deadline less than three months away will force additional technical issues for applicants. Therefore, we request that you amend H.R. 8932 to start the new deadline on October 1, 2025 (for the 2026-27 award year) and avoid legislative changes for the 2025-26 cycle.

Additionally, we request that the Committee require a public comment process for the 2026-27 award year and beyond by amending the applicable language in Section 483(a)(4) of the Higher Education Act (HEA). The public comment process is a vital opportunity for stakeholders, practitioners, and students to offer feedback on the design, wording, and format of the questions and help text. However, on June 17 of this year, ED announced that no public comment would be offered for the 2025-26 FAFSA and that the form would instead "remain consistent" with the prior year. Given the outstanding issues that remain with the FAFSA, we understand this short-term decision, and we acknowledge a more open-ended Request for Information (RFI) process is expected this summer. However, an RFI does not have the same requirements for ED to review each comment, and it should not be the standard in future years.

One result of legislating an October 1 launch date for 2026-27 and beyond may be that the agency again declines to offer public comment. We hope that such a result can be prevented by requiring a public comment process like the one that exists for other ED forms and significant rules for the Title IV programs. The Committee may also wish to examine and strengthen the consumer testing language in Section 483(b)(2) of the HEA to ensure that it is conducted more frequently, transparently, and effectively—including by requiring information on who is involved in such testing and how it results in updates to the form.

Finally, we note other legislative opportunities to increase the awareness and uptake of federal financial aid. The recipients of public and tax benefit programs—such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

and Earned Income Tax Credit—would benefit from receiving information about financial aid and vice versa. The FAFSA Simplification Act supported such interagency coordination to raise awareness of federal resources under Sections 483(c)(3) and 485E(c) of the HEA. Additionally, Section 485E(d) requires a public awareness campaign about Title IV aid involving entities such as institutions of higher education, organizations involved in college access and student financial aid, local educational agencies, public libraries, community centers, businesses, employers, workforce investment boards, and organizations that provide services to individuals who are or were homeless, in foster care, or are disconnected youth. However, these sections could benefit from additional requirements for these plans and campaigns, including legislative deadlines and additional funding.

Again, we thank the Committee for working to fix the FAFSA. With amendments to delay the effective date and require public comment, we could support H.R. 8932, but we have concerns in its current form. Given the importance of a functional financial aid system for all students, we also hope that the FAFSA remains a nonpartisan topic and that the Committee searches for consensus on this legislation. We would be happy to discuss the bill further or provide additional information that may be useful to your efforts, including suggested legislative language. We look forward to continuing this critical conversation as you consider other legislative proposals for the FAFSA and federal financial aid.

Sincerely,

BRYCE MCKIBBEN,

*Senior Director of Policy & Advocacy,
The Hope Center at Temple University.*

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter in support from the American Council on Education, a consortium of several national college organizations that are also in support.

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION,
Washington, DC, July 9, 2024.

Hon. VIRGINIA FOXX,
Chairwoman, Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. BOBBY SCOTT,
Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Workforce, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRWOMAN FOXX AND RANKING MEMBER SCOTT: On behalf of the undersigned higher education associations, we write to offer our support for H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act, which the committee will mark up tomorrow. This bill would move up the statutory date for the annual release of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from Jan. 1 to Oct. 1 each year. Making such a change would have significant benefits for students applying or returning to college each year and is a priority of the higher education community.

Giving students additional time to fully understand the financial aid available to them is critical for a number of reasons. As we noted in our May 22, 2024, letter to your committee, “moving the statutory deadline to October 1st would ensure that students have ample time to complete the form; give college access organizations and counselors time to support student completion; and allow institutions to process aid awards in time for students to make the best college decisions.” This year, we have also seen the unfortunate consequences of delays in that information reaching students, with a current 11.6 percent decline in completed FAFSA applications at this point in the process.

We appreciate the effort and attention your committee has paid to improving the FAFSA process and to meeting the needs of low-income students. We strongly support the FAFSA Deadline Act and encourage your members to vote for it in a bipartisan manner when it is marked up tomorrow.

Sincerely,

TED MITCHELL,
President.

On behalf of:
American Association of Community Colleges.

American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

American Council on Education.

Association of American Universities.

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities.

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker,

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. OWENS).

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act.

This bill addresses the urgent need for predictability and transparency in release of FAFSA, the form that helps so many American families to plan and afford college.

For years, students and parents could rely on the October 1 release date for FAFSA, giving families time to understand their aid options and make informed decisions about the future, but under the Biden-Harris administration, we have seen a pattern of delays, poor planning, and, worse: indifference to the impact these failures have on Americans.

After years of groundwork laid by the bipartisan FAFSA Simplification Act, the Department of Education had every reason to be prepared, but in 2023, they missed their mark, and not just by days or weeks. They delayed the form's release until the end of December, leaving families in the lurch and scrambling to meet a last-minute deadline.

The consequences of these delays are real. It isn't just about dates on a calendar. It is about futures on hold. The Department of Education's dysfunction means 430,000 fewer students filed a FAFSA this year. That is not a small number. It is hundreds of thousands of young people who have abandoned their plans for college simply because they couldn't get the information they needed.

Beyond the missed opportunities for students, these delays burdened schools and States, preventing them from processing aid packages on time and creating even more uncertainty in an already challenging time for higher education.

The FAFSA Deadline Act isn't just a fix. It is a promise, a promise that our Department of Education will be held to an October 1 release date, giving students, families, and schools the clarity and predictability they deserve.

This bill would end the needless confusion. It says that future administra-

tions won't be able to move the goalposts or let the deadline slip through their fingers, all while families are left paying the price.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to make college more accessible for our kids. H.R. 8932 will ensure that students don't lose the chance to pursue their higher education just because of bureaucratic missteps.

It is a commonsense reform that will bring accountability and order to a system that desperately needs it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, not just for us but for the millions of young Americans counting on us to keep the doors of opportunity wide open.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. KILEY).

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that frustrates so many Americans is that our government has gotten involved in doing many things that it really shouldn't be doing, so many excessive regulations and outsized bureaucracies. Then, all too often, it fails to competently perform the basic functions the people actually expect from the government and that they are entitled to as taxpayers. The FAFSA fiasco is a very clear example of that.

Every year, high school students across the country fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA opens doors for millions of students nationwide, ensuring that postsecondary education is accessible and affordable.

Traditionally, the form is released by October 1, giving students and their families plenty of time to decide what postsecondary option is right for them. Unfortunately, the Department of Education has neglected its core responsibility to these students.

The Department's failure to meet deadlines has created unnecessary uncertainty for students and families already struggling with the college application process, which is already stressful to begin with.

The FAFSA Simplification Act passed in 2020 was supposed to make the application process easier to navigate. The Department was even given an extra year to ensure a smooth roll-out of the revised form. However, despite that extended timeline, it failed to deliver on time, and the ones who suffered the most were the students who could least afford it.

The Department knew as early as August 2022 that they would miss the October 1, 2023, deadline but then failed to inform the public. Eight months later, they announced a delay until “sometime in December,” and we had to wait until the last day of the year for a so-called soft launch. This incomplete rollout left critical parts of the form completely unusable.

Even more troubling, the Department abused the statutory gap that allows the release by January 1 by not

even being fully prepared for that hard cutoff. When processing finally began, millions of applications were riddled with calculation errors, forcing reprocessing and causing chaos for students and institutions.

The consequences were devastating. About 430,000 fewer students filed a FAFSA this year compared to last year. To make matters worse, millions of calls for help went unanswered. Families were left in the dark, scrambling for answers with no support during one of the most critical periods in a child's academic journey.

This is why I am proud to cosponsor H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act. This bill would hold the Department of Education accountable by setting a hard deadline of October 1 for releasing the FAFSA and requiring an accountability check-in each September to ensure they stay on track.

Mr. Speaker, I urge colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this important legislation.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Virginia has 22 minutes remaining. The gentlewoman from North Carolina has 18½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Virginia said, several organizations have announced public support for the FAFSA Deadline Act. Here are some of the things that they are saying.

The American Council for Education said: "Given the issues institutions of higher education faced during the 2024–2025 FAFSA processing cycle, it is critically important to avoid future problems. For this academic year, overall first-year enrollment is down by 5 percent, at least in part due to issues with the 2024–2025 FAFSA. In addition, universal access to the 2025–2026 FAFSA is already delayed, and some campus officials have expressed concerns about whether the FAFSA will be fully available by December 1. We offer our full support for this piece of legislation and hope to see it pass the House."

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG).

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to cosponsor H.R. 8932, the FAFSA Deadline Act, and I commend Congresswoman HOUSHIN for her leadership on this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't too often that we get to say this, but there is bipartisan agreement in recognizing the Department of Education's rollout of FAFSA has been nothing short of an

embarrassment. Sadly, it is an embarrassment that negatively impacted students across the country, teachers, professors, and especially lower income students who need financial assistance the most.

I was proud to be part of the bipartisan effort to overhaul FAFSA and make it simpler, but after 3 long years to implement the reforms, the Department dropped the ball numerous times. As a result, over 430,000 fewer students submitted a FAFSA form, according to GAO.

Additionally, there have been numerous reports from across the country about how this botched rollout has affected institutions. This fall semester, institutions experienced the steepest drop in first-year enrollment since the pandemic, pushing many institutions to the financial brink.

This is unacceptable. H.R. 8932 is a commonsense bill to provide students, families, and institutions much-needed clarity by ensuring the FAFSA is released and fully operational on October 1 of each year. Doing so will ensure schools and counselors are able to conduct outreach efforts as needed. Colleges will be able to get their financial aid offers processed in a timely manner, and students will be able to make informed decisions about their academic future.

Mr. Speaker, under the Biden-Harris administration, the Department of Education has become a bloated arsenal of bureaucracy, more focused on woke policies than its core mission. I look forward to working with the incoming Trump administration on rightsizing the Department of Education, if that is even possible, and putting American students and their families first.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H.R. 8932.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, this bill is about improving the process going forward. Obviously, the FAFSA rollout was a debacle, but even though it was a debacle, the FAFSA Simplification Act has resulted in over half a million more students receiving financial aid. We need to make sure that students and families have the information they need to make informed decisions about their futures.

Since H.R. 8932 will be implemented for next year's form, 2025 and onward, I believe it strikes the right balance between setting a clear deadline and providing the flexibility for the Department of Education to fix any lingering issues as they finish implementing the bipartisan FAFSA Simplification Act this year.

□ 0945

I urge my colleagues to support the legislation to help ensure financial aid is distributed promptly and effectively. I look forward to continuing to improve the FAFSA form and expanding access to financial aid as originally in-

tended in the FAFSA Simplification Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the FAFSA is a cornerstone of America's commitment to educational opportunity. When we fail to uphold this promise, we jeopardize the dreams and hard work of students who look to postsecondary education as a pathway to a better future.

The FAFSA Deadline Act is a necessary measure to protect that future by enforcing deadlines, ensuring transparency, and making certain that families receive the aid they depend on to make college accessible.

This is about delivering the basic functionality students deserve and safeguarding their ambitions against bureaucratic failure.

Students have enough on their plates as they prepare for college. It is up to us to make sure that the Federal Government isn't adding to that burden.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1568, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess for a period of less than 15 minutes.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 47 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 0950

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GOODEN of Texas) at 9 o'clock and 50 minutes a.m.

FAFSA DEADLINE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the vote on passage of the bill (H.R. 8932) to establish an earlier application processing cycle for