

Congress' Reconciliation Bill Will Make Higher Education Less Affordable and Accessible for Tennessee Students

Access to affordable, high-quality higher education has been pivotal in creating pathways to the middle class throughout our history. Everyone has the right to pursue their dreams without being burdened by a lifetime of debt, and federal funding protects these pathways to the middle class regardless of someone's ability to pay upfront or outright.

In July 2025, Republicans in Congress passed—and President Donald Trump signed into law—new provisions that will strip critical funding from our colleges and universities to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, making a college education more unaffordable for all of us and completely unobtainable for some, just to give billionaires another handout.

These new policies will:

Increase costs for students and their families

- ✗ **Cut nearly \$300 billion in student aid**, making college less affordable and accessible for everyone.
- ✗ **Take away options for income-driven repayment plans** for 12.49 million borrowers, including 151,600 Tennessee [enrollees in the SAVE plan](#). The typical college graduate will spend nearly \$3,000 more per year on loan payments.
- ✗ **Steal \$761 million from [university endowments](#)**—including from one Tennessee university—which are used to fund financial aid for families and students as well as scientific and critical medical research, as part of a war on higher education that will hurt everyone in the United States. There will now be less funding available to help fund student financial aid and scientific research.

Decrease protections for students and weaken communities

- ✗ **Force 11,553 Tennessee students into private loans** lacking consumer protections by eliminating [grad PLUS](#) loans, meaning borrowers can be exploited with no way to fight back and eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness will be cut off for most public service workers with a graduate degree.
- ✗ **Threaten programs that prepare critical professions—like early educators, teachers and social workers** who help our students—by eliminating programs' access to federal financial aid based on income level and forcing colleges and universities into offering specific and limited courses of study.
- ✗ **End meaningful borrower defense relief for students** who were scammed by predatory colleges, such as the 29,330 defrauded students in Tennessee who've [successfully recouped](#) their losses.