

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1304

February 16, 2024

The Honorable Dr. Miguel A. Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

We write to express our deep concerns about the rollout of the 2024-2025 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Specifically, we urge you to expeditiously resolve the current issue facing students whose parents do not have a Social Security Number (SSN). As a result of changes to the FAFSA application, tens of thousands of U.S. citizen students and others with legal status – who are eligible for financial aid regardless of their parents’ legal status – cannot submit their forms.

We appreciate that the Department of Education (ED) launched a redesigned FAFSA form under the *FAFSA Simplification Act*, which should ensure 610,000 more students from low-income backgrounds receive Federal Pell Grants. Pell recipients will now receive more aid with nearly 1.5 million more students receiving the maximum Pell Grant. However, we are concerned that the flawed rollout will prevent some applicants from submitting timely applications, especially the students who face the greatest barriers to access an education.

As you know, the redesigned form was delayed several months, leaving students with significantly less time than usual to complete their forms and apply to their desired schools. Once it eventually launched in December, many applicants struggled to access or submit the form. We understand that the Department of Education (ED) will now further delay sending students’ FAFSA data to schools while it fixes an issue with the Student Aid Index Calculation.

In particular, we wish to highlight that one of the most serious issues with the new form is that parents who do not have a SSN cannot enter their information. The redesigned form was intended to allow parents or spouses to create a Student Aid account and submit their application without a SSN; however, the new system is returning error messages that prevent students from submitting their applications. According to the [Federal Student Aid website](#), there has not been an update to this SSN issue since January 4, 2024.

We urge the Department of Education to work expeditiously to resolve the technical issues with the new FSA ID system so that parents and students can successfully submit their completed applications.

We also ask you to provide a timeline for resolving this issue; to work with schools and state governments to mitigate the problems; and to conduct outreach to proactively inform students, counselors, and other stakeholders about when families with undocumented parents can expect a solution and how to submit their forms once it's resolved.

Although some colleges have begun pushing back their decision deadlines, many colleges are still awarding financial aid on a first-come, first-served basis. As you know, several states including Alaska, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont and Washington operate as first-come first-serve states. This aid dispersal method used by state schools means the faster a student submits their application, the better their chances of receiving larger award packages. It is imperative that FAFSA resolves these technical problems to ensure eligible students receive the financial aid they need to pursue a higher education.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to your response no later than February 23, 2024.

Sincerely,



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress



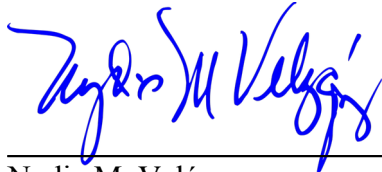
Nanette Diaz Barragán
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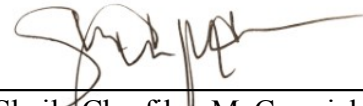
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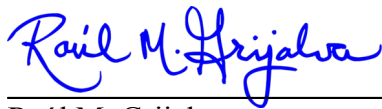
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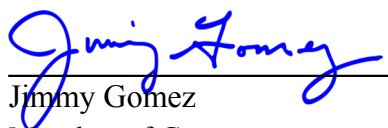
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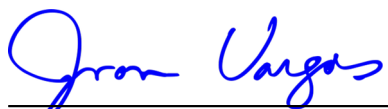
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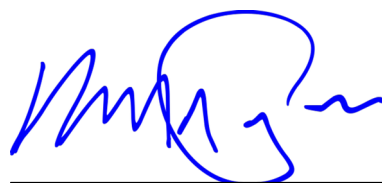
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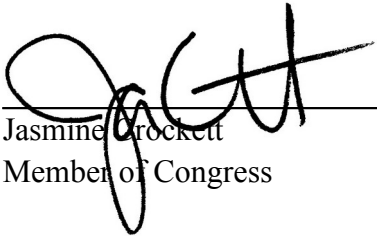
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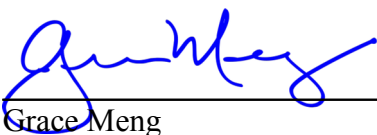
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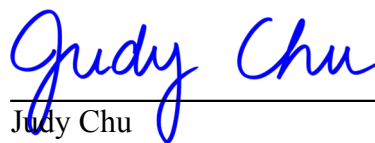
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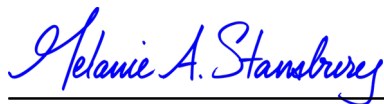
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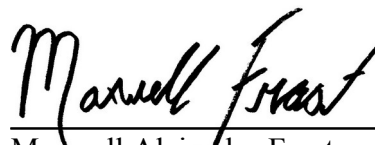
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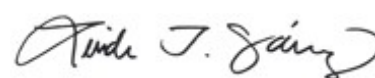
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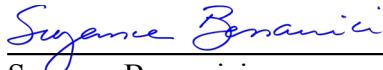
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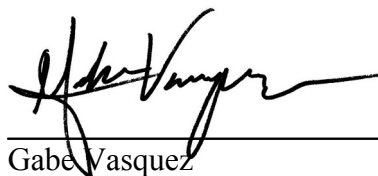
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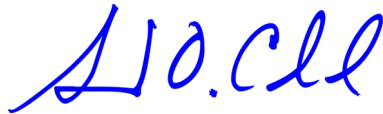
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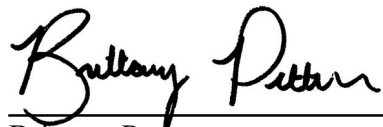
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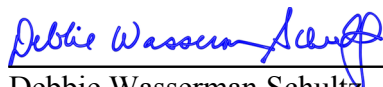
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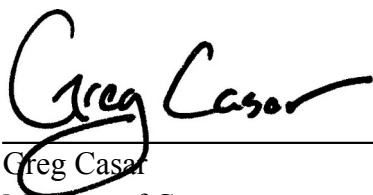
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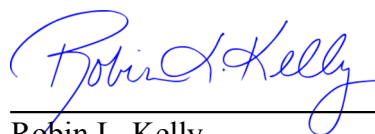
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