

Congressman John Kline
Chairman
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman George Miller
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller,

On behalf of the Presidents' Forum, I am writing in strong support of the modified version of H.R. 3136, the Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act, which the committee is considering. The original legislation was introduced by Congressman Matt Salmon, Congressman Jared Polis, and Congresswoman Susan Brooks.

The Presidents' Forum, established in 2004, is a collaboration of accredited, national, adult-serving institutions and programs which have embraced the power and potential of online education. The Mission of the Presidents' Forum is to advance the recognition of innovative practice and excellence in online learning.

As we look at the biggest issues affecting Higher Education in the United States, we are faced with issues of affordability and cost. To tackle these issues many involved in higher education have been talking about competency-based education, and for good reason. Implemented properly, competency-based education promises to address several of the key challenges facing higher education by increasing efficiency and reducing costs, improving our ability to measure learning outcomes, and shortening time to degree completion.

Today's higher education regulations, with their reliance on measuring time, do not support competency-based education. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 did include a provision for competency-based education, but each program must be approved on an exception basis. This is a deterrent to institutions trying to develop competency-based programs because getting approval is costly and time-consuming -- only two institutions have successfully completed the approval process. Further, this process is for approval of final programs and does not support experimentation.

A demonstration program for competency-based education will allow the Department of Education to waive current regulations, allowing selected institutions to experiment with ways to measure learning and administer federal financial aid based on measuring learning. This

demonstration project can then inform Congress of the changes needed in the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which will support real change and innovation in higher education while preserving academic integrity.

Thank you very much for your consideration and I look forward to working with you to establish a Competency-Based Education Demonstration Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul H. Shiffman" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul H. Shiffman, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Presidents' Forum