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**Opening Statement of Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY)  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development  
Markup of H.R. 4508, the *Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity  
through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act***

I am proud to be a cosponsor of the PROSPER Act, and truly believe the measures within this bill are essential to improve access, completion, and accountability across the higher education system. Most importantly, it will provide students with the opportunity to complete an education that will put them one step closer to achieving the American Dream.

I will echo what Chairwoman Foxx has said in the past to members of this committee as we crafted the PROSPER Act: we are in the business of reforming higher education, not just reauthorizing the *Higher Education Act*.

A simple reauthorization of the 1965 law will not address the needs of our current workforce that is over 6 million skilled workers short, nor will it reverse the \$1.4 trillion of outstanding student loan debt that is placing a drag on the economy.

These facts have stayed with me as the full committee and my subcommittee held twenty-six hearings in the 113<sup>th</sup>, 114<sup>th</sup>, and 115<sup>th</sup> Congresses on issues within higher education. Four of those hearings were held during this Congress alone.

Each of those hearings touched on how the current higher education system is in need of reforms to meet the needs of students, families, future workers, and the employers of tomorrow.

I'm also happy to say that many of the issues discussed in those hearings are addressed in the PROSPER Act.

While the conversations we have had in this committee have been essential to the PROSPER Act in its current form, there are conversations that we have conducted that are even more important: those with our constituents.

Many people have expressed their concerns about the lack of flexibility in grant and loan programs for potential students seeking advanced studies, and others have shared the difficulties associated with earning a traditional degree and finding a good-paying job.

Those who share these concerns are not alone. A September Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found that 49% of Americans believe a four-year degree will actually lead to a good job and pay and only 47% of Americans aren't sure college is worth it anymore.

These numbers emphasize that the status quo in higher education is not enough to serve students, families, or institutions, so it is time we change the status quo with meaningful reforms.

The stories I have heard from students and families in Kentucky have been a constant reminder for the need to stop simply talking about reforming higher education; it's time to actually put forward a bill that achieves needed reforms.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development, it has been a privilege of mine to work with Chairwoman Foxx and members of this committee to introduce a bill with real reforms to address the needs of today's students, as well as the needs of the institutions they attend.

Within the PROSPER Act, we are promoting completion, helping institutions evolve to meet the changing needs of students and the workforce, improving the complex and costly student financial aid system, and promoting accountability for institutions. Additionally, we are giving students a pipeline to the workforce, which is something never before addressed in higher education legislation.

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