

# Revisit the Higher Education Act: Make College More Affordable, Improve Teacher Preparation

**First passed in 1965 to ensure that every individual has access to higher education, regardless of income or zip code, the Higher Education Act (HEA) governs student-aid programs, federal aid to colleges, and oversight of teacher preparation programs. NEA's priorities for the next HEA include:**

- ▶ **Making college more affordable.** The student debt burden stands at \$1.2 trillion and exceeds total credit card debt. Two out of three students borrow money to attend college. Many graduates have crushing debt that constrains their future as well as our economy—they cannot afford to buy homes or cars, start businesses, support families, invest, or contribute to economic growth in other ways.
- ▶ **Enhancing access to higher education.** The goal of NEA's nationwide Degrees Not Debt campaign is to make higher education accessible to all segments of America's increasingly diverse student population, including adult learners. We urge Congress to:
  - Provide incentives for states to reinvest in higher education, not shift costs to students and families
  - Help students begin a pathway to a post-secondary degree by eliminating community college tuition
  - Help students get their degrees faster by reinstating year-round Pell grants
  - Allow federal student loans to be refinanced when interest rates decline
  - Expand loan forgiveness programs to cover contingent faculty and encourage careers in teaching, education, and other forms of public service
  - Expand programs that allow students to earn college credits while still in high school
  - Streamline federal loan repayment plans to create a single income-based option with affordable monthly payments
  - Restore federally subsidized loans for graduate students
  - Permit private student loans to be discharged in bankruptcy
- ▶ **Improving teacher preparation.** To continue to ensure all teachers are profession-ready from the first day they enter the classroom, we must encourage comprehensive residencies that go beyond traditional student teaching. Teacher candidates should be required to demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge necessary for effective practice—for example, by completing a classroom-based performance assessment.
- ▶ **Recognizing educators as stakeholders.** Under traditional principles of shared governance in higher education—principles that NEA advocates—faculty and staff participate in the governance of their institutions. Faculty should have primary responsibility for determining curricula, methods of instruction, and subject matter; establishing requirements for degrees and certificates; reviewing institutional budgets; and making recommendations on financial issues that impact academic programs. The new HEA must also protect the rights of contingent faculty, thereby enhancing student learning and strengthening higher education institutions.

