

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY

 CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

Expanding Disability Access to Higher Education Act

Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)

TRIO Programs and Low-Income and First-Generation Students with Disabilities

Federal Early Outreach and Student Services Programs (referred to here as TRIO programs) help first-generation and low-income students pursue higher education. TRIO includes programs like Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and the McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. In FY2019, TRIO programs helped prepare over 800,000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds for success, many of whom will go on to complete postsecondary education.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds who also have disabilities may face even greater barriers to secondary education success. In the last decade, both high school and postsecondary graduation rates for students with disabilities were significantly lower than students without disabilities. For example, of students with disabilities who attend an institution of higher education, only half will receive a diploma compared to 72 percent of students without disabilities. TRIO-eligible students with disabilities can benefit from TRIO services and supports such as mentoring, career development services, and preparation for postsecondary education.

Expanding Disability Access to Higher Education Act

The Expanding Disability Access to Higher Education Act will provide \$50 million for each fiscal years FY25 through FY29 to help TRIO programs obtain the resources and develop the skills needed to enroll and support TRIO-eligible students with disabilities. These grants will enable TRIO programs to incorporate Universal Designs for Learning—a framework for making lesson plans more accessible to all students—into services and provide accommodations to TRIO-eligible students with disabilities. These grants will provide enhanced funding to TRIO programs and will not detract in any way from the base funding. The Expanding Disability Access to Higher Education Act will also authorize \$10 million for FY25 and each of the four succeeding fiscal years for colleges and universities to establish Offices of Training, Technical Assistance and Accommodations. These offices will serve as a confidential resource for faculty, staff, and students to request accommodations to support their learning. Finally, this bill will enable TRIO programs to collect information about how TRIO-eligible students with disabilities are supported to help other institutions of higher education learn how to best assist these students.

Importance of TRIO Programs

The Expanding Disability Access to Higher Education Act will help TRIO-eligible students, particularly students with disabilities, pursue higher education. Higher education can help young people with disabilities become economically self-sufficient, independent, and achieve self-determination. Students with disabilities, especially those who are low-income or first-generation, should have access to, and graduate from, institutions of higher education at the same rate as their peers in the general population.

Endorsers:

Association of University Centers on Disabilities, The Autism Society of America, Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, National Center for Learning Disabilities, National Disability Rights Network, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Council of Administrators of Special Education, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Association on Higher Education and Disability, National Disability Institute

Co-Sponsors: Senators Butler, Van Hollen, Padilla, Booker