

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 5588

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to make technical improvements to the Net Price Calculator system so that prospective students may have a more accurate understanding of the true cost of college.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 15, 2021

Mr. GUTHRIE (for himself and Mrs. TRAHAN) introduced the following bill;  
which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

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## A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to make technical improvements to the Net Price Calculator system so that prospective students may have a more accurate understanding of the true cost of college.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Net Price Calculator  
5 Improvement Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR NET PRICE CALCULA-**  
2 **TORS.**

3 Section 132(h) of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
4 (20 U.S.C. 1015a(h)) is amended—

5 (1) by redesignating paragraph (4) as para-  
6 graph (6);

7 (2) in paragraph (2), by inserting before the pe-  
8 riod “, and, not later than 1 year after the date of  
9 enactment of the Net Price Calculator Improvement  
10 Act, shall meet the requirements of paragraph  
11 (4)(C)”;

12 (3) in paragraph (3), by inserting after the first  
13 sentence the following: “Not later than 1 year after  
14 the date of enactment of the Net Price Calculator  
15 Improvement Act, such calculator shall meet the re-  
16 quirements of paragraph (4).”; and

17 (4) by inserting after paragraph (3) the fol-  
18 lowing:

19 “(4) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR NET PRICE  
20 CALCULATORS.—Not later than 1 year after the date  
21 of enactment of the Net Price Calculator Improve-  
22 ment Act, a net price calculator for an institution of  
23 higher education shall, at a minimum, meet the fol-  
24 lowing requirements:

25 “(A) The link for the calculator—

1           “(i) is clearly labeled as a ‘net price  
2           calculator’ and prominently, clearly, and  
3           conspicuously (in such size and contrast  
4           (such as shade) that it is readily noticeable  
5           and readable) posted in locations on the in-  
6           stitution’s website where information on  
7           costs and aid is provided (such as financial  
8           aid, prospective students, or tuition and  
9           fees web pages);

10           “(ii) matches in size and font to the  
11           other prominent links on the primary  
12           menu; and

13           “(iii) may also be included on the in-  
14           stitution’s compliance web page, which  
15           contains information relating to compliance  
16           with Federal, State, and local laws.

17           “(B) The input screen for the net price  
18           calculator displays a chart of the net prices for  
19           students receiving Federal student financial aid  
20           under title IV (as required by subsection (i)(5))  
21           for the most recent academic year for which  
22           data are available, disaggregated by income cat-  
23           egories.

24           “(C) The results screen for the calculator  
25           specifies the following information:

1           “(i) The individual net price (as cal-  
2           culated under paragraph (2)) for the indi-  
3           vidual student, which is the most visually  
4           prominent figure on the results screen, in-  
5           cluding a statement of—

6                       “(I) the year for which the net  
7                       price applies; and

8                       “(II) the year from which the  
9                       data was used to determine that net  
10                      price.

11           “(ii) Cost of attendance, including—

12                      “(I) the total estimated cost for a  
13                      student to complete the program of  
14                      study, based on normal time for com-  
15                      pletion of, or graduation from, the  
16                      student’s particular program of study;

17                      “(II) the total annual cost of at-  
18                      tendance;

19                      “(III) annual tuition and fees;

20                      “(IV) average annual cost of  
21                      room and board for the institution for  
22                      a first-time, full-time undergraduate  
23                      student enrolled in the institution;

24                      “(V) average annual cost of  
25                      books and supplies for a first-time,

1 full-time undergraduate student en-  
2 rolled in the institution;

3 “(VI) estimated annual cost of  
4 other expenses (including personal ex-  
5 penses and transportation) for a first-  
6 time, full-time undergraduate student  
7 enrolled in the institution; and

8 “(VII) a statement of—

9 “(aa) the year for which  
10 each cost described in this clause  
11 applies; and

12 “(bb) the year from which  
13 the data was used to determine  
14 each cost described in this clause.

15 “(iii) Estimated total need-based  
16 grant aid and merit-based grant aid, from  
17 Federal, State, and institutional sources,  
18 that may be available to the individual stu-  
19 dent, showing the subtotal for each cat-  
20 egory and the total of all sources of grant  
21 aid, and disaggregated by academic year  
22 for normal time for completion of, or grad-  
23 uation from, the student’s particular pro-  
24 gram of study.

1           “(iv) Percentage of the first-time, full-  
2 time undergraduate students enrolled in  
3 the institution that received any type of  
4 grant aid described in clause (iii), disag-  
5 gregated by their first year and subsequent  
6 years of enrollment up to the number of  
7 years for normal completion of, or gradua-  
8 tion from, their particular program of  
9 study.

10           “(v) The disclaimer described in para-  
11 graph (6).

12           “(vi) In the case of a calculator  
13 that—

14           “(I) includes questions to esti-  
15 mate a student’s (or prospective stu-  
16 dent’s) eligibility for veterans’ edu-  
17 cation benefits (as defined in section  
18 480) or educational benefits for active  
19 duty service members, such benefits  
20 are displayed on the results screen in  
21 a manner that clearly distinguishes  
22 them from the grant aid described in  
23 clause (iii); or

24           “(II) does not include questions  
25 to estimate eligibility for the benefits

1 described in subclause (I), the results  
2 screen indicates—

3 “(aa) that certain students  
4 (or prospective students) may  
5 qualify for such benefits;

6 “(bb) states why the institu-  
7 tion is not including questions to  
8 estimate a student’s eligibility for  
9 such benefits; and

10 “(cc) includes a link to an  
11 appropriate Federal website that  
12 provides information about such  
13 benefits.

14 “(D) The institution populates the calcu-  
15 lator with data from not earlier than 2 aca-  
16 demic years prior to the most recent academic  
17 year.

18 “(5) PROHIBITION ON USE OF DATA COL-  
19 LECTED BY THE NET PRICE CALCULATOR.—A net  
20 price calculator for an institution of higher edu-  
21 cation shall—

22 “(A) clearly indicate which questions are  
23 required to be completed for an estimate of the  
24 net price from the calculator;

1           “(B) in the case of a calculator that re-  
2           quests contact information from users, clearly  
3           mark such requests as ‘optional’;

4           “(C) prohibit any personally identifiable in-  
5           formation provided by users from being sold or  
6           made available to third parties; and

7           “(D) clearly state ‘Any information that  
8           you provide on this site is confidential. The Net  
9           Price Calculator does not store your responses  
10          or require personal identifying information of  
11          any kind.’”.

12 **SEC. 3. UNIVERSAL NET PRICE CALCULATOR.**

13          Section 132(h) of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
14          (20 U.S.C. 1015a(h)), as amended by section 2, is further  
15          amended by adding at the end the following:

16               “(7) UNIVERSAL NET PRICE CALCULATOR.—

17                       “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may  
18                       develop a universal net price calculator that is  
19                       housed within the Department of Education,  
20                       with Department branding, and that may be  
21                       based on or utilize an existing platform devel-  
22                       oped by a public or private entity, that—

23                               “(i) enables users to answer one set of  
24                               questions and receive net prices for any in-



1           stitution that is required to have a net  
2           price calculator under this subsection;

3           “(ii) provides the information required  
4           under subparagraphs (C) and (D) of para-  
5           graph (4) for each institution for which a  
6           net price is being sought;

7           “(iii) is developed in consultation with  
8           the heads of relevant Federal agencies; and

9           “(iv) before being finalized and pub-  
10          licly released, is tested in accordance with  
11          subparagraph (B).

12          “(B) CONSUMER TESTING.—

13          “(i) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary  
14          develops a universal net price calculator  
15          under subparagraph (A), the Secretary, in  
16          consultation with the heads of relevant  
17          Federal agencies, shall establish a process  
18          to submit the universal net price calculator  
19          developed under this paragraph for con-  
20          sumer testing among representatives of  
21          students (including low-income students,  
22          first generation college students, adult stu-  
23          dents, and prospective students), students’  
24          families (including low-income families,  
25          families with first generation college stu-

1 dents, and families with prospective stu-  
2 dents), institutions of higher education,  
3 secondary school and postsecondary coun-  
4 selors, and nonprofit consumer groups.

5 “(ii) LENGTH OF CONSUMER TEST-  
6 ING.—The Secretary shall ensure that the  
7 consumer testing lasts no longer than 6  
8 months after the process for consumer  
9 testing is developed under clause (i).

10 “(iii) USE OF RESULTS.—The results  
11 of consumer testing under clause (i) shall  
12 be used in the final development of the  
13 universal net price calculator.

14 “(iv) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—  
15 Not later than 3 months after the date the  
16 consumer testing under clause (i) con-  
17 cludes, the Secretary shall submit to Con-  
18 gress the final universal net price calcu-  
19 lator and a report detailing the results of  
20 such testing, including whether the Sec-  
21 retary added any additional items to the  
22 calculator as a result of such testing.

23 “(v) AUTHORITY TO MODIFY.—The  
24 Secretary may modify the definitions,  
25 terms, formatting, and design of the uni-

1           versal net price calculator based on the re-  
2           sults of consumer testing required under  
3           this paragraph and before finalizing the  
4           calculator.

5           “(8) REPORT FROM SECRETARY.—Not later  
6           than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Net  
7           Price Calculator Improvement Act, the Secretary  
8           shall submit a report to Congress on steps taken to  
9           raise awareness of net price calculators among pro-  
10          spective students and families, particularly among  
11          students in middle school and high school and stu-  
12          dents from low-income families.”.

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