

Representative Danny K. Davis

Earl N. Williams, Sr., First Chance Act

First-generation college students and students with disabilities face unique barriers to success in postsecondary education. The TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program has a long history of increasing retention and graduation rates of these students. SSS programs provide essential skills and tools to help, including tutoring, advising, and financial assistance. SSS serves over 208,738 students via more than 1,159 programs nationwide, with approximately two-thirds of these participants being first-generation students.

Local Chicago TRIO leaders identified the need for supplemental and emergency grants to better assist first-generation students in persisting in college by helping cover basic and unexpected college costs. This bill emerged directly from their local expertise. *The Earl N. Williams, Sr., First Chance Act* would:

- **Create new supplemental living grants to assist with first-year expenses.** Low-income, first-gen students often struggle to purchase the necessary supplies for college dorm rooms, labs, or course materials. These grants could assist students with these start-up expenses.
- **Provide emergency assistance grants of up to \$500 per academic year to cover unanticipated expenses fundamental for students' persistence in college.** For low-income, first-gen students, emergency expenses – such as a car or computer repair, bus ticket back to college, or child care – can derail college completion. These small emergency grants can make the difference between remaining in school or leaving.
- **Protect the value of the grants by indexing them to inflation.** To ensure that the grant's value remains over time, the bill increases the grant value based on Consumer Price Index.

Given that local programs best understand the needs of their participants, institutions would determine the division of emergency and basic grants, the amount of grants, and the eligible resources covered. In determining the nature of anticipated and unanticipated expenses covered, grantees can consider (but are not limited to) factors affecting level of need (such as academic year, housing, parental status, location in urban or rural area) and any cost of attendance. Funds received by a recipient may only supplement and not supplant non-Federal funds.

The bill is supported by the Council for Opportunity in Education, which offers training and services to student support staff at more than 1,000 colleges, universities, and agencies to help low-income students enter college and graduate. To cosponsor, please contact Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov.