

United States Senate

April 19, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me prior to your confirmation. I am glad we were able to discuss reopening our schools, the need to solve the student debt crisis, keeping higher education affordable, and the importance of providing students and families the opportunity to choose the education that makes the most sense for them.

I have been very clear about the importance of reopening our schools following the prolonged closures forced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made it clear that students can return to the classroom safely right now. Sadly, there are still teachers unions and Democrat politicians who are ignoring the science and keeping our K-12 schools closed. We can't allow the wishes of teachers unions to be prioritized over and above the needs of students. I am thankful for your efforts in Connecticut to reopen schools and I expect that you will keep working to get every K-12 school in the United States to reopen as soon as possible.

Our students deserve every opportunity to graduate college and pursue successful careers without mountains of debt. Massive tuition increases have made college education unaffordable for many students. Throughout my time as Governor, I focused on keeping college costs low so every Floridian could get an affordable education. In Florida, we held the line on tuition for six years straight and increased the transparency of education expenses. Students in Florida are getting a world-class education at a price they can afford, something that Congress and the Administration can work to replicate across the nation.

I introduced the *Student Training and Education Metrics (STEM) Act*, which cuts off federal funding for any institution that raises its tuition, requires standards and

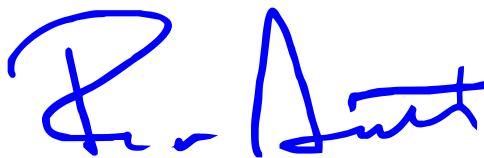
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metrics for both for-profit and non-profit colleges, and holds colleges and universities accountable for a portion of student loan defaults. By implementing a framework for universities to take more responsibility, the incentives of students and institutions of higher education will align to actually prepare students for careers – instead of encouraging mountains of debt and degrees that don't lead to jobs after graduation. The Democrats' plans to "eliminate" all student loan debt is a fairy tale that would only make bad behavior worse by encouraging further tuition increases and shifting the debt burden on to the backs of American taxpayers and families. I hope we can work together and focus on real solutions to bring down the cost of higher education and make sure students are prepared for jobs.

Finally, we must ensure we are doing everything possible so that students and educators are safe. As Governor of Florida, I worked with law enforcement, parents and school officials to pass legislation that put more resources toward school safety and mental health counseling. As Senator, I have sponsored the *Luke and Alex School Safety Act* to codify the Federal Clearinghouse on School Safety, which gives free access to expert recommendations and best practices that schools can implement to improve school security. I have also co-sponsored the *EAGLES Act*, which reauthorizes and expands the National Threat Assessment Center to scale its threat assessment operations, with a particular focus on school safety. Our students and educators must have a safe environment to learn and succeed, and I hope we can work together to achieve this common goal.

Thank you for attention to these important issues, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that we keep college affordable for students and realign the incentives in our education system to promote career readiness and skills training.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Rick Scott
United States Senator