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January 7, 2026

**Memorandum of Support**  
H.R. 6718 (Rep. Mike Lawler R-NY)

The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) supports H.R.6718, also known as the “Professional Student Degree Act.” This legislation amends The Higher Education Act of 1965 by codifying the definition of “professional degree” and enumerates a broad set of programs that qualify for this distinction.

By embedding the definition in statute, H.R. 6718 eliminates ambiguity and ensures consistent interpretation across administrations. This clarity of the definition is critical for institutions and students planning long-term education and financial decisions. This bill not only lists current professional programs; it establishes a framework that allows additional programs to be included as workforce needs evolve.

Codifying the definition ensures graduate students across the country retain access to federal loan limits designated for professional education, reducing financial barriers and preventing enrollment disruptions down the line. This legislation safeguards financial access and affords students of diverse backgrounds to pursue degrees in critical fields like health care, education, and STEM-related fields strengthening our New York State’s and our nation’s workforce.

More than half of all students in New York in professional programs study at an independent college or university. Without this safeguard, many students will find their prospects for success sharply diminished, and New York’s higher education ecosystem will suffer significant economic harm.

Representing more than 100 independent colleges and universities in New York State who educate almost 500,000 students annually, CICU supports and urges the swift passage of H.R. 6718.