Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx,

The College Affordability Act of 2019 (CAA) represents a tremendous step forward for today’s students. If adopted, it would deliver a comprehensive proposal to reauthorize the expired Higher Education Act (HEA). In our recent analysis, IHEP found that the CAA makes great strides to improve college affordability for students with financial need, promote transparency about student outcomes, and foster college completion:

- The CAA delivers a critical investment in the Pell Grant program by increasing the maximum award amount and indexing to inflation, thus ensuring that the Pell Grant continues to drive college opportunity for the next generation of college students. Critically important, Representative Davis’ substitute amendment increases the maximum award by $625 – more than the bill’s initial increase. To further strengthen this effort, we encourage lawmakers to fund the program through mandatory, rather than discretionary, funding.

- The CAA also makes significant progress to ensure that higher education continues to transform individuals, families, and communities by restoring Pell Grant eligibility for all incarcerated students and improving access to quality higher education programs in prisons.

- The bill includes the bipartisan, bicameral College Transparency Act, which will create a federal student-level data network to empower students, families, policymakers, institutions, and employers to make evidence-based decisions and promote strong student outcomes.

- The CAA will enable more seamless institution-to-institution reverse credit transfers to improve degree completion for all students, especially among the 35 million American adults with some college credit, but no degree.

Of the Higher Education Act reauthorization proposals to date this Congress, the CAA is the most comprehensive and equity-driven. We urge the swift markup of the bill and would like to see it scheduled for consideration by the full House. Our nation’s students—and our nation itself—cannot wait any longer for an HEA that recognizes the diversity of today’s students and supports their access to and success in college.

Sincerely,

Michelle Asha Cooper, President
The Institute for Higher Education Policy

cc: United States House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor