

# Higher Education Should Be Accessible

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Online education continues to grow in popularity, even as overall college enrollment declines.<sup>5</sup> The online format is particularly attractive to working adult learners, rural learners, and people in education deserts, who are drawn to the flexibility and accessibility of online learning.<sup>6</sup> Although online learning can remove common obstacles to college education, barriers still exist. Removing these barriers will help ensure that online education, the only workable option for many potential students, can be more affordable, accessible, and adaptable.

Cost and access also compound the challenges of living in an education desert. As many as 47 million Americans do not have access to high-speed internet.<sup>8</sup> This means that only half of the homes in the continental United States have download speeds of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) or higher, which is the baseline for broadband. About one-third of households have access to speeds of less than 5 Mbps, and 15% have no internet access at all.<sup>9</sup>

The cost of internet access can also prove burdensome. Among 35 countries studied, the United States has the second-highest broadband costs.<sup>10</sup>

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## Remove institutional barrier .

**Louisiana** HB 676 prohibits institutions from refusing to provide a transcript because a student owes a debt. Institutions also cannot withhold services or prevent course registration if a student is in default on a federal loan.<sup>15</sup>

## Reduce financial barrier for working adult learner .

**Ohio's** Second Chance Grant reduces financial barriers preventing Ohioans with some college