

January 16th, 2025

To: Senator Timothy Kaine, Senator Mark Warner, Representative John McGuire

Subject: Support Professional Development and Cosponsor H.R. 1477/S. 722

I am a mental health counselor and current doctoral student in Counselor Education and Supervision in your state. I am writing to strongly urge your office to cosponsor S. 722/H.R. 1477, the *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act*. This important piece of legislation would expand the eligibility of 529 savings plans to include the cost of earning and maintaining professional credentials.

As someone who has already completed a master's program in counseling and is now pursuing advanced studies at the doctoral level, I understand firsthand how crucial it is for mental health professionals to continue their education and obtain specialized certifications in order to enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, and ultimately provide the best possible care to those we serve. Unfortunately, while 529 savings plans currently cover tuition and fees for traditional higher education, they do not cover the expenses associated with earning professional credentials. These credentials, often offered by accredited national organizations, are essential for professional growth and for meeting the evolving needs of clients.

For counselors, especially those in underserved communities, the ability to use 529 savings for credentialing costs could make a significant difference. Many of us are already burdened by student loan debt from our graduate programs, and the additional costs of professional certification can be a financial obstacle. With the increasing demand for mental health services—especially as mental health challenges continue to rise in our communities—ensuring that counselors can continue to access training and certification without facing financial hardship is critical to improving client care and increasing workforce capacity.

529 savings plans have already proven to be a vital resource for helping individuals access higher education, and by expanding these plans to cover professional credentials, we can help ensure that counselors and other professionals can continue to develop their expertise and contribute more effectively to their communities.

Please consider cosponsoring S. 722/H.R. 1477 to help expand educational and professional opportunities for counselors, mental health professionals, and workers across all fields. Your support of this legislation would not only ease the financial burden for current professionals but also help improve the quality of services we provide to those in need.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Nicole Taylor
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Doctoral Student, Counselor Education and Supervision
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