

Union Calendar No. 380

119TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 2516

[Report No. 119–444]

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to prohibit political litmus tests in accreditation of institutions of higher education, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 31, 2025

Mr. OWENS (for himself, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. GROTHMAN, Mr. ROSE, Mr. BABIN, Mr. ONDER, Mr. MOORE of West Virginia, and Mr. MESSMER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

JANUARY 13, 2026

Additional sponsors: Mr. FINSTAD, Mr. STEUBE, Mr. FINE, and Mr. GUTHRIE

JANUARY 13, 2026

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on March 31, 2025]

A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to prohibit political litmus tests in accreditation of institutions of higher education, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
 2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 *This Act may be cited as the “Accreditation for College*
 5 *Excellence Act of 2025”.*

6 **SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON POLITICAL LITMUS TESTS IN AC-**
 7 **CREDITATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER**
 8 **EDUCATION.**

9 (a) *OPERATING PROCEDURES REQUIRED.*—Section
 10 496(c) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
 11 1099b(c)) is amended—

12 (1) in paragraph (8), by striking “and” at the
 13 end;

14 (2) in paragraph (9), by striking the period at
 15 the end and inserting “; and”; and

16 (3) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(10) confirms that the standards for accredita-
 18 tion of the agency or association do not—

19 “(A) except as provided in subparagraph
 20 (B)—

21 “(i) require, encourage, or coerce any
 22 institution to—

23 “(I) support, oppose, or commit to
 24 supporting or opposing—

1 “(aa) a specific partisan, po-
2 litical, or ideological viewpoint or
3 belief or set of such viewpoints or
4 beliefs; or

5 “(bb) a specific viewpoint or
6 belief or set of viewpoints or be-
7 liefs on social, cultural, or polit-
8 ical issues; or

9 “(II) support or commit to sup-
10 porting the disparate treatment of any
11 individual or group of individuals on
12 the basis of any protected class under
13 Federal civil rights law, except as re-
14 quired by Federal law or a court order;
15 or

16 “(ii) assess an institution’s or program
17 of study’s commitment to any ideology, be-
18 lief, or viewpoint;

19 “(B) prohibit an institution—

20 “(i) from having a religious mission,
21 operating as a religious institution, or
22 being controlled by a religious organization
23 (in a manner described in paragraph (1),
24 (2), (3), (4), (5), or (6) of section 106.12(c)
25 of title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (as

1 *in effect on the date of the enactment of this*
 2 *paragraph)), or from requiring an appli-*
 3 *cant, student, employee, or independent con-*
 4 *tractor (such as an adjunct professor) of*
 5 *such an institution to—*

6 *“(I) provide or adhere to a state-*
 7 *ment of faith; or*

8 *“(II) adhere to a code of conduct*
 9 *consistent with the stated religious*
 10 *mission of such institution or the reli-*
 11 *gious tenets of such organization; or*

12 *“(ii) from requiring an applicant, stu-*
 13 *dent, employee, or contractor to take an*
 14 *oath to uphold the Constitution of the*
 15 *United States; or*

16 *“(C) require, encourage, or coerce an insti-*
 17 *tution of higher education to violate any right*
 18 *protected by the Constitution.”.*

19 ***(b) LIMITATION ON SCOPE OF CRITERIA.—****Section 496*
 20 *of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1099b) is*
 21 *further amended by amending subsection (g) to read as fol-*
 22 *lows:*

23 ***“(g) LIMITATION ON SCOPE OF CRITERIA.—***

1 “(1) *IN GENERAL.*—*The Secretary shall not es-*
2 *tablish criteria for accrediting agencies or associa-*
3 *tions that are not required by this section.*”

4 “(2) *INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY.*—*An institu-*
5 *tion that is in compliance with the standards of its*
6 *accrediting agency or association that assess the insti-*
7 *tution in accordance with subsection (a)(5) shall meet*
8 *the accreditation requirements for certification as an*
9 *institution of higher education under section 102 and*
10 *subpart 3 of this part, regardless of any additional*
11 *standards adopted by the agency or association for*
12 *purposes unrelated to participation in programs*
13 *under this Act.*”.

14 **SEC. 3. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

15 *Nothing in this Act, or the amendments made by this*
16 *Act, shall be construed to prevent religious accreditors from*
17 *holding and enforcing religious standards on institutions*
18 *they choose to accredit.*

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