



**SHEEO**

STATE HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

**NASH**  
National Association  
of System Heads

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos, Secretary  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin, Secretary  
United States Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretaries DeVos and Mnuchin:

Spring is the time when most potential students apply for the financial aid they need to attend colleges, universities, and technical institutions. Federal financial aid is a key element of making college affordable for millions of American students. This means that these students and their families must complete the Federal government's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, a lengthy and complex document that many, including Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander, have described as daunting.

The Federal government responded to this challenge by permitting students and families to extract from IRS files the relevant data from their personal income tax returns, with those data then populating portions of the FAFSA form. This vastly streamlined the process of completing the FAFSA and was a particular boon to those students and families who typically have not encountered complex forms.

However, earlier this year, the IRS and the Department of Education stopped students and families from automatically extracting data from their IRS records due to concerns about privacy and security. We recognize the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of both tax and personal identity information and commend the Departments for guarding that confidentiality. However, the needs of students for an easier way to complete the FAFSA remain imperative.

Consequently, we ask that your departments focus immediate efforts to addressing the security concerns in order to permit the automatic export of IRS data to student FAFSA forms to resume as soon as possible. Millions of students and their families will benefit from your success in that work.

Our organizations represent the leaders of public university systems from throughout the nation as well as the women and men who oversee higher education on behalf of state governments.

Thank you for considering our request that you expedite security changes to permit the resumption of the exporting of taxpayer data to the FAFSA form. It is not an understatement that the future of the nation and its economy will be brighter if you are successful and more low income students are able to complete the form, receive needed aid, enroll in postsecondary programs, and complete their certificates and degrees.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

George Pernsteiner  
President, SHEEO

Rebecca Martin  
Executive Director, NASH