



# The Bell Policy Center

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## Prohibiting Legacy Preferences in Higher Ed Institutions (HB 21-1173)

### Testimony to the House Education Committee

Laura Valle Gutierrez, Senior Policy Analyst • April 1, 2021

Madame Chair and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of [HB21-1173](#). My name is Laura Valle Gutierrez and I am the senior policy analyst at the Bell Policy Center. The Bell Policy Center provides policymakers, advocates, and the public with reliable resources to create a practical policy agenda that promotes economic mobility for every Coloradan.

Having an equitable postsecondary education system is essential for meeting our goals as a state around credential attainment and workforce development. We know the populations who have been historically left out of postsecondary systems, disproportionately low-income communities and communities of color, also have less opportunity for upward economic mobility through good careers. This is because postsecondary education is, more so than ever, a vital vehicle for economic opportunity in our state and nation.

House Bill 1173 is an easy way to introduce more fairness into our postsecondary system. Not only does this policy change not cost anything, but it helps ensure that access to opportunity, rather than access to social capital, is the driving force behind our state's postsecondary system. Historically marginalized groups are less likely to have alumni connections, so the use of legacy preferences in admissions could exacerbate equity gaps in access if two students – all else held equal – are being admitted on a difference of historical privilege.

Further, using legacy status as a criterion for admissions isn't [how our postsecondary education system should operate](#). Our public institutions should strive to serve Coloradans, especially those who have been historically left out of these systems. Legacy admissions preserve structurally racist policies that kept communities of color locked out of our education systems for far too long.

Colorado's workforce increasingly needs to be more skilled and credentialed. While some groups of Coloradans already meet the credentialing goals set by the state to meet the demands of our growing industries, other groups, such as Black and Latinx Coloradans are far behind. As of 2017, Colorado had a 35 percentage point gap in postsecondary enrollment between white and Latinx residents, [one of the largest in our nation](#). As the work from the [Bell Policy Center's Future of Work Advisory Council](#) shows, there are many ways to work toward these goals: from expanding access to apprenticeships and concurrent enrollment, to stackable credential programs and flexible scholarship and grant programs.

But we need to use every tool at our disposal to chip away at these gaps. Your support for HB21-1173 would help concretely address inequities in our system, at no cost, to help make our postsecondary education system fairer and serve all Coloradans better.

Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer questions.