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PRESS RELEASE  
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## **Florida CAN and partner institutions present before Florida House subcommittee**

*Executive director Laurie Meggesin was joined by partners from LEAP and Earn Up*

Representatives from the Florida College Access Network (Florida CAN), assisted by community partners across the state, joined forces for a presentation before the Florida House of Representatives' Post-Secondary Education Subcommittee last month.

The goal of the presentation was to highlight the importance of boosting post-secondary attainment within the state.

“A high school diploma by itself is no longer a ticket to the middle class as it was for previous generations,” said Laurie Meggesin, Florida CAN’s executive director. “Increasing postsecondary attainment is absolutely essential for our continued economic growth here in Florida. It is also our best opportunity to build a path to prosperity for all of our students and families.”

Meggesin’s comments were followed by a presentation from Dr. Paul Dosal, vice president for student affairs and student success at the University of South Florida. Dosal’s remarks centered on [FUSE](#), a guaranteed admission program launched in October that allows students at seven regional Florida College System partner institutions to earn an associate’s degree before transferring to USF for a bachelor’s degree. USF is a partner of [LEAP](#), the Hillsborough College Access Network, which has embraced FUSE as one of its core initiatives.

“What we’re providing for students is a clear destination,” Dosal said. “When they start, they have an end in mind and we’re trying to get them through in a timely way with minimal levels of debt, with the degree of their choice, and fully prepared to enter the marketplace.”

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Tina Wirth is the vice president of education and workforce development for the [JAXUSA Partnership](#). In 2014, JAXUSA and other community partners launched [Earn Up](#), a local college access network (LCAN). Wirth's presentation focused on her organization's efforts to improve postsecondary attainment among northeast Florida's veteran population.

"There are so many choices, so many colleges and universities shouting for their attention," said Wirth, who added that veterans are sometimes overwhelmed by their options. "They've got their own tricky path to navigate as college students."

Florida CAN and its partners were preceded by several speakers, including Alan Levine, chairman of the [Higher Education Coordinating Council](#) (HECC), which [recently adopted a postsecondary attainment goal for Florida](#). HECC serves as an advisory board to the governor and legislature, and Levine emphasized the notion that a postsecondary degree or certificate is only one piece of the puzzle.

"We don't want to push for degrees for degrees' sake. That's why we defined it as a high-quality certificate," Levine said. "It is equally noble to seek a high-quality certificate that leads to gainful employment. That should be the basic tenet of our policy: what is the best pathway for a person to be able to seek the career of their choice?"

You can view [video](#) and [slides](#) from the Jan. 12 Florida House Post-Secondary Education Subcommittee.

### **About Florida College Access Network**

The mission of the Florida College Access Network is to create and strengthen a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to improve college & career preparation, access, and completion for all students. Our Big Goal is to increase the percentage of Florida residents who hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential to 60% by the year 2025. For more information, visit [www.floridacollegeaccess.org](http://www.floridacollegeaccess.org).

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