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CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

July 30, 2008

The Honorable George Miller, Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon,

The Center for Law and Social Policy is writing to express its support for H.R. 4137, the Higher Education Opportunity Act. This bill will build on and strengthen efforts to ensure more low and moderate-income Americans receive the education, skills, and supports they need to access postsecondary education and training and gain the credentials needed for family-supporting jobs.

In particular, we commend the conference for addressing the following issues in the Higher Education Opportunity Act:

- Increasing the federal commitment to student persistence and completion by piloting a program to attach a Student Success Grant to every Pell Grant, to ensure that students receive the services they need to stay in college;
- Making college more affordable for low-income and nontraditional students by increasing the Pell Grant, allowing eligible students to receive the Pell Grant year-around, and expanding eligibility for the Academic Competitiveness Grants;
- Creating a Business Workforce Partnerships for Job Skill Training in High Growth Occupations or Industries initiative that funds partnerships of colleges and employers to link credit-bearing college programs to business workforce needs and develop career and educational pathways;
- Providing Bridges from Jobs to Careers grants to colleges to increase lower-skilled students' access to and completion of occupational credentials, through bridge programs and other innovations in remediation (or developmental) education;
- Simplifying the financial aid application process and making it more responsive to those in modular and compressed programs of study and those laid off from their jobs;

- Allowing those individuals who lack high school credentials to prove their readiness for college and qualify for federal financial aid by successfully completing six credits in lieu of taking an “ability to benefit” test;
- Strengthening the CCAMPIS program by setting parameters for increasing the grant levels and expanding school eligibility, as well as increasing awareness about the program;
- Targeting homeless youth and those aging out of foster care for additional supports, including those available through the TRIO programs, and expanding the independent student definition to include those youth who age out of foster care and youth who are adopted or move into the legal care of a guardian from foster care after reaching age 13;
- Expanding access to postsecondary education and training for those in corrections institutions thereby helping reduce recidivism rates; and
- Reauthorizing the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance.

Thank you for your efforts to expand access to and promote success for low-income and nontraditional students in postsecondary education.

Sincerely,

Amy-Ellen Duke
Senior Policy Analyst

Julie Strawn
Senior Fellow