



• FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND CEO •

July 30, 2008

The Honorable Edward Kennedy

Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi

Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
379A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable George Miller

Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon

Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) and the nearly 3,000 financial aid offices we represent, I'm writing to express our support of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. We urge all members to vote for the Conference Report.

NASFAA applauds your hard work and the work of other higher education leaders in the House and Senate to pass this vital piece of legislation reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. This bill provides much needed increases in federal grant aid for needy students and creates important protections for students who must borrow money to pay for college.

NASFAA is particularly pleased that the legislation increases the authorized funding levels for the Federal Pell Grant program, which helps the neediest of the nation's students. It also increases the minimum Pell Grant award, extends eligibility to year-round enrollment so that students who accelerate their program are not penalized, and expands the timeframe of student eligibility.

These increases in the Pell Grant program flexibility and authorization levels are a good first step; however the litmus test is at the appropriations level, when we put our legislative rhetoric into dollars.

NASFAA also supports the language requiring private student loan applications to be certified. This provision will help ensure that students receive the counseling they need to obtain the Title IV grant and loan assistance for which they need to make informed choices about their borrowing to avoid unnecessary debt.

The bill also introduces a federal code of conduct for financial aid offices that work with loan

providers. The bill carefully balances the need for lenders and financial aid offices to collaborate to meet the best interests of students with protection against potential conflicts of interest. We hope this will ultimately provide one law for financial aid offices and lenders to abide by, rather than having to navigate a confusing maze of other conflicting codes. Such a reduction in administrative burden can free schools to return their attention to their primary mission: serving students.

This long-anticipated legislation comes at a pivotal time. Further delay could have caused the years of effort put into refining the bill to be lost. Passage just before so many schools commence their academic year signals a commitment to students that the nation is willing to invest in their academic success. If America is going to maintain its position as a world leader, we cannot let these students fall through the cracks.

The timing of this bill also presents significant challenges for colleges and universities. NASFAA fully supports the intent of the legislation to provide students and parents with useful information so they can make informed decisions about college, but we have some concerns about our members' ability to comply with the new law given the short time period they will have to implement complex changes. NASFAA looks forward to working with lawmakers and the U.S. Department of Education to ensure institutions can implement the provisions of the bill seamlessly and in a timely fashion without being unnecessarily overburdened.

Although this legislation is a good beginning, it is *only* a beginning. Much more needs to be done to remove the financial barriers to higher education. Our next step must be to increase our investment in our future by expanding aid and support systems for our nation's needy students. The future of our nation depends on it.

Again, I want you to know that NASFAA supports passage of the Conference Report and urges all Members of Congress to vote for it. Further, NASFAA urges President Bush to sign this bill into law to strengthen the federal government's commitment to create a highly educated, more competitive workforce that is better prepared to handle the challenges of a global economy.

I urge you to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have or if you think I can assist your efforts in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip R. Day, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Philip R. Day, Jr.
President and CEO

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