

February 6, 2008

Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Education and Labor Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Association of the Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) and the twenty-eight institutions that we represent, I write in support of H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, and the Manager's amendment. We greatly appreciate the accommodations that you and your staff have made to make regulatory and reporting requirements more appropriate for colleges.

I want to thank you for including the Education Disaster loan provision in the base bill. As you are aware, AJCU led this effort to include this language following up on over two years of efforts to assist the Gulf Coast institutions. Not only will this loan assist the Gulf coast institutions, but, also will be helpful to institutions in the future, in fact as early as today, given the damage from last night's tornado to Union College in Jackson, TN.

Secondly, we greatly appreciate the inclusion in the Manager's amendment of Teach Grant language that will allow students, who major in "high-need" academic subjects, to meet the requirements of Teach Grants, by teaching in that academic field, even if that subject were to lose its "high need" designation.

Thirdly, we also are relieved that the accreditation language that AJCU and the higher education community worked on with the accreditors was included in the Manager's amendment. We believe it is important that higher education institutions are able to retain their autonomy in developing standards in collaboration with accreditors.

We do appreciate the newer version of reporting requirements for college cost in the Manager's amendment. While the watch list has been removed, and replaced by lists of the top 5% of tuition and fee increases, you can imagine that this would not be our choice, but it is far better than the punitive

measures in earlier drafts. We thank you for approaching this issue from the perspective of greater transparent of providing consumer information.

We still have concerns with the Tierney cost provision, which links decreased tuition rates to increased Pell grant funding for a campus. We believe that Pell grants should not be linked to college tuition rates, but continue to be focused on need. The Tierney language may make it difficult for disbursements of all Pell grant recipients in the future.

We also hope that we can change the 30 minute notification requirement in response to campus incidents. While we understand the need to notify students at the earliest possible moment, this specific time requirement could make the situation worse. We hope that we can try to strike this provision in conference.

We are concerned about several amendments, such as the Welch amendment on endowments. This is a premature rush to judgment before the 136 institutions with endowments greater than \$500 million respond to questions from the Senate Finance Committee.

Please extend our appreciation to Gabriella Gomez, Julie Radiccio, and Jeff Apple for their arduous work on this bill and for including AJCU in the process. We look forward to continuing to work with you throughout the conference process.

Best regards,

Charles L. Currie, SJ
President