

## **GROWING & STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S MIDDLE CLASS**

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### **HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ACT**



**110<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS**

**THE HONORABLE GEORGE MILLER  
CHAIRMAN  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**July 2008**

### **HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ACT: EXPANDING COLLEGE ACCESS, STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE**

A college education continues to be the best path to the middle class. More and more, high college prices and other obstacles are putting a college degree further out of reach for America's students. The Higher Education Opportunity Act would reform our higher education system by:

- ✓ **Encouraging colleges to rein in price increases and providing consumers with helpful information**
- ✓ **Restoring integrity and accountability to the student loan programs**
- ✓ **Simplifying the federal student aid application process**
- ✓ **Making textbook costs more manageable**
- ✓ **Expanding college access and support for low-income and minority students**
- ✓ **Strengthening our workforce and our competitiveness**
- ✓ **Increasing college aid and support for veterans and military families**
- ✓ **Ensuring equal college opportunities for students with disabilities**
- ✓ **Boosting campus safety and disaster readiness plans**
- ✓ **Encouraging colleges to adopt sustainable and energy-efficient practices**

## ***Encourages Colleges to Rein in Price Increases and Provides Consumers with Helpful Information***

- ➔ Ensures states maintain higher education funding and provides incentives, such as additional need-based aid, to encourage colleges to hold down price increases.



- ➔ Creates a user-friendly website to provide students and families with helpful information about college pricing when making important education decisions.
- ➔ Establishes web-based calculators to provide students and families with early estimates of their expected college costs.
- ➔ Holds institutions to be accountable for their tuition increases.
- ➔ Encourages colleges to use innovative methods to keep costs down.

## ***Restores Integrity and Accountability to the Student Loan Programs***

- ➔ Requires institutions and lenders to adopt strict codes of conduct.
- ➔ Provides students with fair and full information about their borrowing options when taking out and repaying student loans, including the terms and conditions of both federal and private student loans; and promotes financial literacy and education for students and parents.

- ➔ Protects students from aggressive marketing practices by lenders.

## ***Simplifies the Federal Student Aid Application Process***

- ➔ Streamlines the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process, and creates an easy-to-navigate two-page FAFSA-EZ form for low-income families.
- ➔ Provides families with extra time to plan for their college expenses.
- ➔ Encourages the Department of Education to coordinate with the Internal Revenue Service to use information that the government already has.



## ***Makes Textbook Costs More Manageable***

- ➔ Provides students with advance information on textbook pricing to help them plan for expenses before each semester.
- ➔ Ensures that colleges and faculty have full textbook pricing information when making purchasing decisions.
- ➔ Requires publishers to provide pricing information on “unbundled” versions of every “bundled” textbook they sell.



## ***Expands College Access and Support for Low-Income and Minority Students***

- ➔ Makes college more affordable for low-income and non-traditional students by allowing students to receive Pell Grant scholarship aid year round.
- ➔ Expands funding for graduate student programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Predominately Black Institutions.
- ➔ Strengthens the TRIO and GEAR UP college readiness and support programs for low-income and first-generation students.

## ***Strengthens Our Workforce and Our Competitiveness***

- ➔ Creates programs to bolster students' interest in science, technology and critical foreign languages through collaborations with businesses and other stakeholders.
- ➔ Improves teacher training and development programs and focuses on recruiting teachers into high demand science and technology fields.
- ➔ Encourages students to enter vital public service jobs by authorizing up to \$10,000 in loan forgiveness for public defenders, prosecutors, firefighters, military service members, first responders, law enforcement officers, educators, nurses, and others serving the public interest.



## ***Increases College Aid and Support for Veterans and Military Families***

- ➔ Creates a new scholarship program for active duty military personnel and family members, including children and spouses of active duty military service members or veterans.
- ➔ Establishes support centers to help veterans succeed in college and graduate.
- ➔ Ensures fairness in student aid and housing aid for veterans to make it easier for them to go to college while also fulfilling their military service duties.



## ***Ensures Equal College Opportunities for Students with Disabilities***

- ➔ Establishes a national center to provide support services and best practices for colleges, students with disabilities, and their families.
- ➔ Helps colleges recruit, retain, and graduate students with disabilities and improves education materials and facilities.
- ➔ Expands eligibility for Pell grant scholarships and other need-based aid for students with intellectual disabilities.

## ***Boosts Campus Safety and Disaster Readiness Plans***

- ➔ Helps all colleges develop and implement state of the art emergency systems and campus safety plans, and

requires the Department of Education to develop and maintain a disaster plan in preparation for emergencies.

- ➔ Creates a National Center for Campus Safety at the Department of Justice to work in collaboration with the COPS Program.
- ➔ Establishes a disaster relief loan program to help schools recover and rebuild in the event of a disaster.

### ***Encourages Colleges to Adopt Sustainable and Energy-Efficient Practices***

- ➔ Creates a grant program to help colleges and universities design and implement sustainable practices.
- ➔ Convenes the first-ever higher education summit on sustainability to examine how to implement energy-efficient and sustainable practices at institutions of higher education.

### ***Support for the House-Passed Version***

“H.R. 4137 builds on the meaningful education reform Congress achieved through the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. The legislation contains several important policy changes to increase access and help protect students and families and taxpayers. ...On behalf of the millions of college students across the country we encourage support of this legislation.”

-- *U.S. PIRG and United States Student Association*

### ***Support for the House-Passed Version***

“...Private loans are an estimated 27 percent of all college lending. Ten years ago, they made up 5 percent. Given the sharp rise, we hope Congress quickly passes the consumer protections Rep. George Miller, a California Democrat, has drafted. They're part of the larger law governing higher-education spending. ...The University of Texas at Austin's Henry Urich tells us he likes the proposal for that reason. He estimates that 1,500 to 2,000 UT students have private loans. But, like many financial aid officers, he has no way of knowing for sure. The notice would let him and other aid officials alert students about additional options, whether they're federal Stafford loans or the Texas Grant program. ...With college getting more costly each year, students and families need all the help they can get. Congress should do its part.”

-- *Editorial, Dallas Morning News, January 30, 2008*

“Elected leaders [from the U.S. House of Representatives] on both sides of the aisle have demonstrated a true commitment to protecting America's students and parents from deceptive practices and conflicts of interest which are rampant in the student loan industry. The New York State Legislature passed similar legislation earlier this week which, like the [House's] Sunshine Act, will help put an end to the vicious cycle of debt perpetuated by lenders and their university partners.”

-- *NY Attorney General Andrew Cuomo on the House's May 2007 passage of the Student Loan Sunshine Act, whose provisions were included in the House-passed version*

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