

Castle Helps Extend Tuition Assistance to Students at Lower Cost Colleges -- February 27, 2007

Washington D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, a senior Member of the House Education and Labor Committee and co-chair of the Community College caucus, today helped pass the 'Pell Grant Equity Act of 2007' in the House, which would allow students who attend the less expensive schools in the United States, such as community colleges, to benefit from Pell Grant awards. The bill repeals a provision known as "tuition sensitivity" that was added to the Higher Education Act in 1992 which unfairly lowers Pell grant award to students at schools where tuition and fees are less.

"With the passage of this legislation in the House, it is a great day for the estimated 90,000 to 100,000 low-income students who will now be able to benefit from the tuition assistance provided through the Pell Grant award program. No school or student should be treated unfairly due to the cost of the education provided or ability to pay those prices and this bill gets rid of such a bias. Additionally, this legislation acts as an incentive for institutions, such as community colleges to continue to provide a low-cost option of higher education which becomes increasingly important as college costs continue to rise exponentially each year," Castle said.

The Pell Grant program provides post-secondary education federal aid through the federal government, and is the largest need-based grant aid program in the country. The grants are awarded based on a "financial need" formula determined by the U.S. Congress and using criteria submitted through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The maximum Pell Grant award, which benefits 5.5 million annually of the neediest college students, was recently raised for the first time since 2003, to \$4,310 by Congress in the fiscal 2007 spending law. No student can receive an award higher than the cost of attendance, which includes tuition, fees, books, transportation and living expenses.

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