

Castle, House Edu. Committee Approve "College Opportunity & Affordability Act" -- November 15, 2007

Washington, DC -

Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, Member of the House Education and Labor Committee, voted in favor of legislation to address rising college costs and make a college education accessible for qualified students. The House panel voted unanimously to approve H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007. This legislation will reform and strengthen many of the nation's higher education programs to help students and their families.

"I am pleased with much of what is contained within the bipartisan College Opportunity and Affordability Act, including additional support for Minority Serving Institutions and teacher quality programs as well as the positive changes and expansions the bill makes for a number of student loan programs," Castle said.

"Although this bill takes a step in the right direction to address soaring college costs, this is an issue that continues to concern me. During Committee consideration of the bill, I offered an amendment to address the issue of college costs by requiring institutions of higher education to implement procedures to reduce college costs in high-cost targeted areas. My amendment will also put in place penalties for institutions that continue to raise their tuition at alarming rates.

"Though I did not request a vote on my amendment, I do believe we need to closely monitor this issue to ensure colleges are doing everything possible to reduce college costs so that any student wishing to obtain a higher education may do so."

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act also strengthens provisions to avoid conflicts of interest in the student loan programs.

Specifically, H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act would:

- Streamline the federal student financial aid application process;
- Make textbook costs more manageable for students;
- Allow students to receive year-round Pell Grant scholarships;

- Strengthen college readiness programs;
- Increase college aid and support programs for veterans and military families;
- Improve safety on college campuses;
- Ensure equal college opportunities for students with disabilities; and
- Strengthen our nation's workforce and economic competitiveness.

H.R. 4137 is the second of two major higher education bills introduced this year. The first, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act was signed into law in September.

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