

HIGHER EDUCATION BILL PASSES HOUSE -- FEBRUARY 07, 2008

Washington, DC -- Today, Congressman Mike Castle addressed the House in support of HR 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, which passed the house with a bipartisan majority. A senior Member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, and Member of the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee, Rep. Castle has worked for over a decade on behalf of students and families in an effort to solve the college cost crisis.

A supporter of increased loan limits for students, Rep. Castle believes students should enjoy reasonable lender fees so they are not faced with over-burdensome debt when they graduate. Unless colleges face increased accountability for their role in the cost crisis, however, too many low- and middle-income students will face the same financial hurdles, year after year.

To uncover what is driving college costs on college and university campuses and creating these financial hurdles for students, Congressman Castle offered the College Cost Accountability Amendment, which was adopted, to improve transparency of rising tuition and fees.

Additionally, Representatives Castle and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) introduced an amendment to clarify the funding that can be authorized to support Teach For America's national expansion efforts. TFA is a teacher corps program of close to 3,000 corps members, including several corps members recruited from Delaware colleges and universities that teach in low-income areas around the nation.

"I am pleased with the House Passage of the College Opportunity and Affordability Act which takes steps in the right direction to ensure colleges do everything possible to allow students to access a college education," said Rep. Castle. "Under this bill, colleges and universities with escalating costs will outline the basis for these costs. This bill will bring greater transparency to an unchecked system so the consumers of higher education -- parents and students -- have more information about the education in which they're investing."

"I am also proud support a bill which increases the maximum Pell grant to \$9,000 from the current \$5,800 per year; creates a cost index to help students and their families compare tuition increases at different colleges; bars lenders from giving schools financial perks in order to get on a preferred lender list; and penalizes states that cut funding for colleges by withholding federal funds."

Specifically H.R. 4137:

Encourages colleges to rein in price increases

Creates transparency in costs and provide access to this information

Improves access to affordable student loan programs

Simplifies the federal student aid application process

Increases funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Makes textbook costs more manageable

Expands college access and support to veterans and military families

Ensures equal college opportunities for students with disabilities

Boosts campus and off-campus safety and disaster readiness plans

Encourages colleges to adopt sustainable and energy-efficient practices

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