



Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform

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PRESS RELEASE

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RISE Act to Expand Opportunities for Students *Representatives introduce bill to repeal anti-education law*

WASHINGTON, DC – In an effort to reverse a dangerous trend of the government blocking students from attaining financial aid to go to college due to prior drug convictions, members of Congress introduced a bill yesterday to expand educational opportunities by repealing the Higher Education Act (HEA) Drug Provision.

Rep. Barney Frank (MA-4) and 55 other members of Congress introduced the Removing Impediments to Students' Education (RISE) Act, H.R. 1184. If enacted, the bill will repeal the HEA Drug Provision, which, since taking effect in 2000, has denied financial aid to over 160,500 students with prior drug convictions. Over 200 organizations and 115 student governments from across the country have called on Congress to repeal the law. With growing concern regarding the effects of this failed policy, education advocates are expected this year to push hard in both the House and the Senate to reinstate aid to those who need it most.

Representatives from organizations such as the NAACP, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Faces and Voices of Recovery, and the ACLU stood with seven members of Congress at a press conference in the U.S. Capitol Building today, applauding them for introducing the bill.

“We all need to stand up and raise our voices about this unjust law,” said Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18). “Education is a door opener. That barrier in front of students with drug convictions hurts our nation and the economy.”

Rep. Robert Andrews (NJ-1) likened the RISE Act to a “faith-based initiative,” discussing the importance forgiveness for religious communities.

Supporters say the RISE Act will help students like Marisa Garcia, a junior at California State University-Fullerton, who nearly had to drop out of school after being caught with a marijuana pipe.

“The HEA Drug Provision created an immense burden on me and my family, but I had a support structure to help me get through this; many others are not so fortunate,” said Garcia. “This law is fundamentally flawed.”

For more information, please contact Chris Mulligan of the Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform (CHEAR) at 202-293-8340 (office) or 202-491-1544 (cell), or visit www.raiseyourvoice.com for a list of supporting organizations.

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