

Washington, DC - This afternoon the house passed legislation to address the soaring price of college tuition and remove other obstacles that make it harder for qualified students to go to college.

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act (H.R. 4137) would reform and strengthen the nation's higher education programs to ensure that they operate in the best interests of students and families. The legislation is the second major step that the 110th Congress has taken to make college more affordable and accessible for all qualified students. Last year, Congress enacted into law a \$20 billion increase in college financial aid over the next five years, the largest increase in student aid since the G.I. Bill of 1944.

“Investing in higher education is one of the most important investments that Congress can make. By making college more affordable and by removing barriers to enrollment, we are laying the groundwork for a highly educated and skilled workforce to lead our nation into the future,” said Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX-20). “All in all, this legislation takes steps to comprehensively reform our higher education system so that it works best for students and families.”

According to a report released in October of 2007 by the College Board, tuition and fees had increased across the board, at public and private colleges and at two-year and four-year colleges over the past five years. The bill would address these rising prices by encouraging colleges to rein in price increases, ensuring that states maintain their commitments to higher education funding, and providing students and families with consumer friendly information on college pricing and the factors driving tuition increases.

The legislation also strengthens provisions previously approved by the House to avoid conflicts of interest in the student loan programs. The bill's new provisions include requiring better consumer disclosures and protections on private student loans. Together these protections form a Bill of Rights for college consumers.

“Restoring accountability to the student loan program by strengthening consumer disclosure provisions and protections on student loans will help Americans restore their faith and confidence in the college loan system,” he added.

H.R. 4137 is a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the primary federal law aimed at expanding college access for low- and middle-income students. For more information on the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, click [here](#).

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