A Letter to the House: Support Pell Grants, Vote Against H. Con. Res. 34

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Today, the Student Aid Alliance sent the following letter to members of the House of Representatives:

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the millions of students, educators, administrators and college presidents we represent, we urge you to oppose H.Con. Res. 34 when it comes to the floor for a vote. The budget proposed by Chairman Ryan for fiscal year 2012 seeks to "ensure that the next generation inherits a stronger, more prosperous America." It is a worthy goal, but we do not believe it can be met with the large cuts to student aid contained in the proposal.

While we recognize the Pell Grant Program needs a thorough review to ensure its future stability, we strongly support protecting the nation’s poorest students by keeping the maximum grant at $4,550; ensuring their student loan debt does not increase while in college through the accumulation of excessive interest; and the protection of programs such as the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) Program. Although we do appreciate the chairman’s stated purpose in setting the maximum Pell Grant award level above what was proposed in H.R. 1, we do not know how this budget would provide even this reduced grant.

It is pennywise and pound-foolish not to support the nearly 10 million Americans who choose to earn their way out of poverty by going to college using a Pell Grant. Pell Grants are an effective tool for upward mobility and increased economic productivity. From a practical standpoint, taxpayers will reap the benefits of this investment through increased tax revenues and reduced social costs for unemployment programs. These graduates are far more likely to be employed and earn substantially more than non-college graduates. Moreover, highly skilled, college-educated workers are in high demand by American companies. A recent survey by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found that by 2016, the United States will need 2 million new workers with college degrees but will fall short of that number by at least 1 million. Without trained workers to fill these jobs, the United States will risk falling behind countries like China and India, which have invested heavily in educating their workforces.

The budget suggests that cutting Pell Grants would reduce the cost of tuition when virtually all evidence concludes that the opposite is true.[1] Two noteworthy studies of the relationship between federal student aid and tuition produced during the George W. Bush and Clinton administrations found no evidence of a link between federal financial aid and tuition increases.

Far from easing the burden on the very students our economy needs, this budget would cost our country skilled workers, valuable jobs and real economic growth. Simply put, this budget would damage the United States’ economic health and the quality of life for American citizens now and for future generations.
We urge you to vote against this budget resolution when it comes to the floor and preserve funding for Pell Grants, SEOG and other vital student aid programs.

Sincerely,

Molly Corbett Broad

Co-Chairman

David Warren

Co-Chairman


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