June 14, 2007

The Honorable Margaret Spellings  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings:

As you know, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is moving forward with reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. We’re writing to let you know that we plan to make changes to the section of the law that deals with accreditation. We believe these changes will strengthen our nation’s accreditation system by clarifying the Department of Education’s responsibilities with respect to recognizing accreditation agencies and organizations, and by specifying the criteria that these agencies should examine when reviewing institutions of higher education.

Obviously, we’re aware that you have just completed negotiated rulemaking on accreditation based on current law, and that the next step is for the Department to publish proposed regulations on this topic. Although Members differ on the particulars, we support your overall goal of ensuring that our accreditation system is an effective means of promoting quality in higher education. However, given our Committee’s expectation that the current accreditation provisions will soon be changed, and that a new round of rulemaking on this issue will subsequently be needed, we respectfully ask that you refrain from proposing new regulations on accreditation until after the Higher Education Act is reauthorized.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

With respect and appreciation,

Sincerely,

Edward M. Kennedy  
Chairman

Michael B. Enzi  
Ranking Member