U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the higher education associations listed below, I write to urge you to oppose amendments to H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, being offered by Representative Michael Castle and by Representatives Patrick Murphy and Sue Myrick.

The underlying House bill, as modified by the manager's amendment, has established a vast array of new measures to pressure colleges to keep posted sticker prices down. In all, there are more than 25 pages of legislative requirements regarding price in the legislation before you. For example, the bill creates three sets of public lists based on price, each with ten subcategories. Colleges that exceed a federally prescribed level of increase will have to file detailed reports with the Secretary of Education and establish federally mandated Quality Efficiency Task Forces on campus.

In addition, under H.R. 4137, all colleges will face substantial expenses to collect the considerable amounts of new data which will be required by the U.S. Department of Education. Some of this information will then be used by the Department to develop a Higher Education Pricing Summary Page for every college in the nation. Yet, although these provisions are already in the bill, the Murphy-Myrick amendment would require that similar information be provided in a different – and less reliable – form. The provisions now in H.R. 4137 seek to provide students and families with information about past patterns in order to allow them to make judgments. The Murphy-Myrick amendment would require institutions to try to predict a future over which they have little control – including, among other things, inconsistencies in state funding.

Adding these even more explicit requirements, as well as those in the Castle amendment requiring annual benchmarks for the Quality Efficiency Task Forces, are excessive and unnecessary. These amendments could have the perverse effect of contributing to the cost of college.

We hope you will vote in opposition to both the Castle amendment and the Murphy/Myrick amendment.

Sincerely,

David Ward
President

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On behalf of:
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators