

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) praised passage today of bipartisan legislation to address the soaring price of college tuition and remove other obstacles that make it harder for qualified students to get a higher education. By a vote of 380-49, the House approved the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 4137), which would reform and strengthen the nation's higher education programs to ensure that they operate in the best interests of students and families. The Senate is also expected to take a final vote on the legislation this week; if passed the bill would then be sent to the President's desk for his signature.

"The skyrocketing costs of a college education and other barriers to access have put increased pressure on aspiring college students and their families," stated Rep. Hoyer. "Maryland students and families, who have seen college costs in our state rise 40 percent in the last five years, will benefit from the new provisions in this bill to improve our nation's higher education programs and make college more affordable and accessible."

"I'm also pleased with the investments to enhance minority education, including increased resources for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority-serving institutions, which will benefit Maryland institutions, including Bowie State University."

An October 2007 report from the College Board showed that, over the previous five years, tuition and fees had increased across the board, at public and private colleges and at two-year and four-year colleges. The Higher Education Opportunity Act would address these rising prices by encouraging colleges to rein in price increases, ensuring that states maintain their commitments to higher education funding, providing students and families with consumer friendly information on college pricing and the factors driving tuition increases, and streamlining the federal student financial aid application process.

Additionally, the bill would:

- Make textbook costs more manageable for students by, among other things, helping them plan for textbook expenses in advance of each semester;
- Increase the maximum Pell Grant scholarship to \$8,000 and allow students to receive the grant year-round;
- Strengthen college readiness and support programs for minority and low-income students;

- Increase college aid and support programs for veterans and military families;
- Improve safety on college campuses and help schools recover and rebuild after a disaster;
- Ensure equal college opportunities and fair learning environments for students with

disabilities; and

- Strengthen our nation's workforce and economic competitiveness by boosting science, technology, and foreign language educational opportunities.

Today's action builds on the landmark steps taken by the 110th Congress to make college more affordable for millions of students and families. [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-including cutting student loan interest rates in half and increasing Pell Grants. Additionally, Democrats enacted a new G.I. Bill that will provide college scholarships to troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

[For more information on the Higher Education and Opportunity Act, click here](#) .

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