

CHARLIE MELANCON
3RD DISTRICT, LOUISIANA

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND COMMERCE

COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
April 9, 2008

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The Honorable Edward Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 205150

The Honorable Howard "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kennedy, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Enzi and Ranking Member McKeon:

We are writing today to express our support of the Education Disaster Loan provision that was included in H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act (Title VIII, Section 864). Specifically we are asking for Senate support and requesting that the Senate accept the House's Education Disaster Loan provision in conference on the Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization.

The Education Disaster Loan provision was initially conceived as part of an effort to address the devastation of Hurricane's Katrina and Rita in 2005. The colleges and universities in our state have overcome tremendous obstacles and are providing critical resources to the region's continuing recovery. These institutions remain our paramount concern; however this has evolved into a broader effort to provide assistance across the nation to higher education institutions in the future should they be faced with a similar catastrophic disaster.

Under this provision, permanent guaranteed disaster loans would be distributed by the U.S. Department of Education to higher education institutions suffering losses incurred as a result of a major natural or man-made disaster to meet the immediate cash flow loss for institutions of higher education. Loan funding would be separately funded by Congress after a disaster and would originate from the federal treasury, and, only those institutions located in a federally declared disaster area (as defined under the Robert T. Stafford Act) would be eligible to receive an education disaster loan.

Institutions eligible for the program would receive a low-interest loan, with repayment spread out over 30 years. The funds would be flexible, tailored to the needs of individual institutions and regions and could be used to support reimbursement for lost tuition and other revenues; faculty

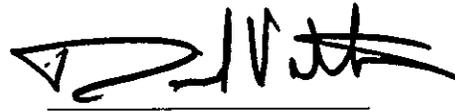
salaries aimed at faculty retention; and construction costs for replacement or renovation associated with the disaster. The purpose of the loan program would be to provide supplemental assistance to institutions. It would not replace Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance or insurance reimbursements.

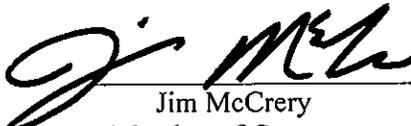
We urge you to support enactment of an Education Disaster and Emergency Relief Loan program in conference for the Higher Education Act and ask that this education disaster loan be one of the top priorities by the House when new programs are considered in conference. With such a program in place, institutions across the country will know that if a major disaster affects their campus that a federal loan will be available to assist them in becoming fully operational again.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Mary Landrau
U.S. Senator


David Vitter
U.S. Senator


Jim McCrery
Member of Congress


William Jefferson
Member of Congress


Rodney Alexander
Member of Congress


Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress


Charles Boustany
Member of Congress