



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
202/879-4400
www.aft.org

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October 17, 2005

Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, we write to reiterate our position on the Higher Education Act (HEA) and urge you to oppose any further cuts to the student aid program in the upcoming budget reconciliation markup. We appreciate the opportunity to share our views with you.

As we mentioned in our previous correspondence on the HEA, the AFT believes that the reauthorization should be focused on expanding college opportunity for all, with special emphasis on students with the most need. Despite some concerns with the committee-passed version of the HEA, S. 1614, we are pleased that the bill makes incremental steps toward helping students enter and succeed in college.

However, even though the HEA bill adds programs like Pro-Gap, we remain concerned about the overall future of the student aid program. Unfortunately, the Budget Committee already has called for drastic cuts from the HELP Committee totaling \$13 billion. This amount disproportionately impacts programs under the committee's jurisdiction. We question the wisdom of these cuts. Likewise, we oppose any additional cuts that may be proposed in the process. Instead, the federal government should support programs that offer opportunity, like student aid, so that more low- and middle-income Americans can get the education required to become productive citizens in today's economy.

Although the budget resolution calls for these savings, we hope that ultimately you will oppose these and any additional cuts in the final reconciliation package that

may overburden our students and their families. We hope you take our comments into consideration as you move forward on this and other related legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KWC', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristor W. Cowan
Director, Legislation Department

KWC:gd opeiu#2 afl-cio