



October 28, 2003

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-2101

Dear Senator Kennedy:

On behalf of the 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), including 125,000 faculty and staff at institutions of higher education, I write in support of the College Quality, Affordability, and Diversity Improvement Act of 2003 (QUAD Act). This legislation should contribute to greater access to higher education and enhanced teacher preparation.

#### Financial Aid

The cornerstone of the Higher Education Act (HEA) is federal financial support for students to attain higher education, and a top priority of the AFT is increasing the maximum amount available for Pell Grants. We are pleased that the QUAD Act increases the Pell Grant maximum over the next six fiscal years to \$11,600. The AFT also strongly supports efforts to provide mandatory funding for Pell Grants. The move to mandatory spending would provide a realistic alternative to the current reliance on massive shortfalls to fund the program.

With respect to loans, the QUAD Act not only reduces the overreliance on loans by increasing the Pell Grant maximum but it also curtails other costs. The elimination of origination fees for low-income students will benefit those relying on loans. Working students, who are a growing number of those attending college, would receive additional support because more of their earnings would be exempt from financial-need calculations.

#### Teacher Education

The AFT strongly supports provisions of the QUAD Act that would strengthen teacher preparation programs and build partnerships. We believe this legislation is necessary to ensure that there are well-prepared and highly qualified teachers in every classroom.

We are particularly pleased that the bill includes a one-year internship which would serve as an induction period for new teachers and support their transition

American Federation  
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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AFT Teachers  
AFT PSRP  
AFT Higher Education  
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into the classroom. Further, the AFT strongly supports the creation of a core pedagogy curriculum to establish what prospective teachers should know about teaching subject matter.

The QUAD Act also provides innovative approaches to helping individuals become teachers and ensuring their success in the classroom. The AFT supports provisions of the bill that would create a well-structured mentoring program, programs that better engage community colleges in the preparation of our teachers, and a program to encourage paraprofessionals to become teachers.

The AFT also supports the efforts in the QUAD Act to reduce the significant loan burden for teachers who choose to work and remain in our inner-city schools teaching in high-need fields. Expanding loan forgiveness to include math, science, special education, bilingual education and early childhood education in high-needs districts is necessary to the future success of our children.

#### College Persistence

The AFT is pleased that the QUAD Act would address the shortcomings of our higher education system in retaining minority and low-income students. We believe that its proposed programs will better engage institutions and states in helping students continue their studies. The AFT will be releasing a report in the next few weeks, *Student Persistence in College: More than Counting Caps and Gowns*. We believe its findings will complement your bill.

#### College Costs

Like many education organizations, the AFT is concerned with the recent large increases in college costs. In addition to increasing grants to students, we support the mandate that states maintain a base amount of assistance if they are to continue receiving federal aid. We also believe that a provision requiring the convening of institutions of higher education to address future growth in college tuition, might further address the college-cost issue.

#### Institutions Serving Minorities

A growing number of students entering colleges and universities are minorities. The AFT supports provisions of the QUAD Act that would expand opportunities at both Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The union also believes it is important to provide loan

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forgiveness for students who commit to teach at American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Supporting and strengthening these institutions is important in the ongoing effort to ensure that students, particularly minorities, persist in completing their education.

We appreciate your leadership on the HEA and look forward to working with you and the other members of the Committee as we go through the reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

Charlotte J. Fraas  
Director, Legislation Department

CJF : kb