
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Wednesday, October 14, 2009
Press Office, 202-226-0853

Chairman Hinojosa Statement At Subcommittee Hearing On Ensuring Student Eligibility Requirements For Federal Aid

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. **Rubén Hinojosa** (D-TX), chairman of the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, for a subcommittee hearing on “Ensuring Student Eligibility Requirements for Federal Aid.”*

I want to welcome my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to this important hearing on “Ensuring student eligibility requirements for federal aid.”

I want to give a special welcome to Chairman Miller for his tremendous leadership on these issues and thank him for joining us today.

As members of this Committee, we have the responsibility of providing oversight of our institutions of higher learning, regardless of whether they are public, non-profit, or part of the for-profit postsecondary education sector.

I want to thank the GAO for the release of their report: “Proprietary Schools: Stronger Department of Education Oversight Needed to Help Ensure Only Eligible Students Receive Federal Student Aid”.

Earlier this year, I requested that GAO study the for-profit postsecondary education sector to learn more about how these institutions function and deliver educational services. I am troubled by what GAO found.

First of all, I am concerned that congress and the department of education have not been providing the appropriate oversight necessary to protect students as they pursue educational opportunities at for-profit colleges and universities.

We have also not done enough to monitor the quality of educational programs offered at some of these institutions despite the growth of the for-profit sector in recent years.

As you know, for-profit colleges and universities enroll large numbers of low-income and minority students. Based on the findings of the GAO report, it is clear that some of these institutions have not served students well.

I am particularly concerned that some for-profit institutions have engaged in a number of unscrupulous practices to increase their access to title iv funds. In some cases, officials from for-profit sector institutions, assisted students in obtaining invalid high school diplomas from diploma mills, in order to gain access to federal loans.

In another case, the GAO found that there were irregularities in the administration of the “ability to benefit,” (ATB) tests, such as providing students with the answers to the test questions, so that students would meet the minimum eligibility requirements for title iv programs.

Encouraging students who do not possess a high school diploma to incur an inordinate amount of student loan debt and to pursue a course of academic study that they are unprepared for does a disservice to students.

The GAO report is a great starting point for today’s hearing, and I hope that we can have a robust discussion and learn more about these issues from our distinguished witnesses.

Thank you, I now yield to Ranking Member Guthrie.