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March 19, 2010

RE: H.R. 4872 Health Care & Education Affordability Reconciliation Act and College Access and Completion Grant (CACG) Funding

Dear Representative Miller,

We are writing to urge you and your colleagues in the House to support the passage of the H.R. 4872. Specifically, as you choose which portions of HR 3221 SAFRA you wish to include in the Reconciliation Bill, we ask that you consider the College Access and Completion Innovation Fund's \$750 billion towards the continuation of the College Access Challenge Grants (CACG). The CACG will allow states to extend essential educational and financial aid services to many underserved low-income and first-generation college-bound students. It will also assist in increasing the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education especially here in the state of California.

California received the largest CACG grant in the amount of \$7.6 million. The CA Student Aid Commission (CSAC), primarily through its statewide college outreach program known as the CA Student Opportunity and Access Program (CAL-SOAP), is administering the CACG program. Cal-SOAP was established in 1978 by the California state legislature to support low-income, first generation college students in successfully pursuing a postsecondary education.

Similar to the TRIO programs, the Cal-SOAP programs serve thousands of students, 4th to 12th grade, with a comprehensive menu of supplemental services that include college and career advising, assistance with completion and submission of college and financial aid applications, academic tutoring, college entrance exam preparation, and college campus tours. Like GEAR-UP, the Cal-SOAP programs have a matching requirement from its partners. To date, the 16 Cal-SOAP programs have received a total of over \$15 million matching resources from local partners.

As introduced in the House, H.R. 4872 Health Care & Education Affordability Reconciliation Act proposes to spend billions of dollars on education to invest in America's economic future. We do not want to diminish the need for or importance of any of the spending included. In fact, increases in these programs will help in reaching the Obama Administration's goal of making college more accessible as well as providing reliable and affordable student loans for all families. We ask that in making these generous allowances for the House not to neglect the state agencies such as the California Student Aid Commission that provide these vital services through the College Access Challenge Grants.

Please stand up on behalf of low-income students here in the state of California and throughout the country and help inject funds into America's economic future by supporting a investment in these critical, life-changing programs.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Gutierrez-Sandoval
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Maureen Mason-Muyco
Vice President State Issues



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