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National Association for College Admission Counseling

...guiding the way to higher education

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October 18, 2013

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
US House of Representatives
2235 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cummings:

On behalf of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, I write to express our strong support for the FAFSA Fairness Act of 2013. We appreciate your efforts to help reduce the barriers students face in obtaining a post-secondary degree.

Founded in 1937, NACAC is an organization of more than 13,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education ("college"). NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice, which can be found on our website (www.nacacnet.org). Our members include school counselors, college admissions officers, independent educational consultants, community-based organizations, and counselor educators, among others.

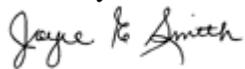
Throughout its history, NACAC's members have worked hard to help under-served students realize that college is a possibility for them. Your legislation helps a small but important population that might not otherwise fulfill their academic potential – students that are unable to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) because they have left home due to an abusive family environment; are unable to locate their parents; have parents who are incarcerated; or some other unique situation that prevents them from accessing parental financial information. These students often think that college is too expensive, that they do not qualify for financial aid and therefore do not apply to college.

The FAFSA Fairness Act would allow students who do not have contact with their parents, or who meet other special criteria established by educational institutions, to complete the FAFSA as a “provisional independent.” These students would then be able to submit their financial information to a college, which could then calculate a provisional financial aid package before conducting the dependency override process. This would give the student a realistic estimate of the financial aid they can expect and help them decide which college they should attend.

This legislation compliments research NACAC has conducted, which found that when students complete the FAFSA, the college attendance rate significantly improves (attendance also increases when a student applies to at least one college). We believe that your legislation will help increase the number of students attending college, which is critical for the future of our nation.

Again, thank you for introducing the FAFSA Fairness Act of 2013. NACAC looks forward to working with you on this legislation and other initiatives that help increase college access. Please contact NACAC's Director of Public Policy and Research David Hawkins at dhawkins@nacacnet.org or (703) 299-6809 for additional information or if you have any questions about NACAC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joyce Smith".

Joyce Smith, CEO