

Washington, DC -- Continuing his commitment to expand access to higher education for local families, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted today for legislation to bring down sky-rocketing tuition costs, simplify complex federal student aid programs and end corrupt practices in the student loan industry.

“As a father of three, I know first-hand about the rising costs of college tuition, and just how critical higher education is for our children’s future and the future of our economy,” **Arcuri said**. “From helping students with sky-rocketing textbook costs to improving access to a college education for veterans and children of active duty service members, this legislation will provide much needed reforms to our nation’s higher education system and make college more affordable for local families. I am committed to making sure local families have the resources and the help they need to get the best education possible and achieve the American dream.”

The College Access and Affordability Act (H.R. 4137) reauthorizes the landmark Higher Education Act of 1965 and builds on the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, the largest federal investment in student aid since the 1944 GI Bill, which was signed into law in September and strongly supported by Arcuri. H.R. 4137 further addresses rising college costs and removes other barriers that keep qualified students from pursuing higher education.

According to a recent College Board report, tuition and fees at four-year public institutions have increased 31 percent, accounting for inflation, over the last five years. In New York, 243,696 students take out need-based loans each year at public four-year schools – causing a typical student to accumulate \$14,276 of debt. In the 24th district alone, there are 12,681 borrowers, attending our eight four-year colleges and universities and four two-year institutions.

H.R. 4137 would:

- Increase the maximum authorized Pell grant from \$4,310 to \$9,000 and allow Pell grants to be used year round.
- Ensure that states maintain higher education funding and provide incentives, such as additional need-based aid, to encourage colleges to hold down price increases.
- Hold colleges and universities accountable for their tuition hikes and increase the amount of information schools and lenders must provide students about the long-term costs of college.

- Create a user-friendly website to provide students and families with helpful information

about college pricing when making important education decisions.

- Streamline the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process, and create an easy-to-navigate two-page FAFSA-EZ form for low-income families.
- Provide students with fair and full information about their borrowing options when taking out and repaying student loans, including the terms and conditions of both federal and private student loans, and give students 30 days after the approval of a loan to find a better deal.
- Require student loan institutions and lenders to adopt strict codes of conduct, including barring lenders from giving schools financial incentives to gain access to a “preferred lender” list for students.
- Create a new scholarship program for active duty military personnel and family members, including children and spouses of active duty military service members or veterans.

“It is long past time to reform our higher education system so it operates in the best interests of students and families, increasing our global competitiveness and strengthening our economic future,” **Arcuri said**. “The outstanding educational institutions in the 24th district are a vital part of our region’s economy, and this bill will help them reach more students, building our local workforce and keeping more families out of debt.”

To increase America’s competitiveness in today’s global marketplace, H.R. 4137 would create public/private partnerships with businesses and other stakeholders to bolster students’ interest in science, technology and critical foreign languages. It also contains provisions to improve teacher training and development programs and focus on recruiting teachers into high demand science and technology fields.

Since taking office, Arcuri has also supported – and the House has passed – legislation to improve and reauthorize the national Head Start program, add thousands of highly qualified K-12 math and science teachers to our schools, and expand research opportunities.

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