



February 10, 2016

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
Room 104
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senate
Russell Senate Office Building
Room 393
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hatch and Senator Casey,

I write on behalf of the 420 members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in support of your legislation to repeal 20 U.S.C. 1091(r), an ill-advised provision of the Higher Education Act that unwisely delays or denies federal student aid to college students with drug convictions. We are joined in our opposition to this provision by numerous education, addiction treatment, civil rights, religious, and criminal justice reform groups who have all come to the conclusion that the provision in question is profoundly unfair and counter-productive.

As educators, our members strongly believe that treatment and more education, not less, are the better solutions to drug abuse. As such, they view the mechanical denial of eligibility for student aid as a detriment to rehabilitation. In addition, this provision is unfair because it exacts extra-judicial punishment on low- and middle-income families who depend on student aid, but leaves affluent students with identical convictions unaffected. We believe that the judicial system is best qualified to punish drug violations without the imposition of additional punitive measures in the nation's higher education laws.

We thank you for your leadership on this important topic and stand ready to work with you in support of your legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Edward M. Elmendorf'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'E' at the beginning.

Edward M. Elmendorf
Senior Vice President for Government Relations
and Policy Analysis