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October 28, 2003

Senator Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

On behalf of the National Education Association's (NEA) 2.7 million members, we would like to offer our comments on the College Quality, Affordability, and Diversity Improvement Act of 2003. We commend you on your considerable efforts to address key issues in the Higher Education Act reauthorization. Your comprehensive, creative, and well-grounded approach sets the stage for a constructive dialogue that we hope will result in positive and effective changes to this important federal law.

We are particularly pleased that your legislation:

- **Helps maximize student access to higher education by improving student aid programs.** NEA supports the proposed significant increase in the maximum Pell Grant award and the move toward making the Pell Grant program mandatory rather than discretionary within the federal budget. Such a move is among NEA members' highest priorities for the HEA reauthorization. Pell Grants provide the bridge for low-income students to one of our most valuable national treasures, our higher education system. A system that is the envy of the world should be accessible to all of our nations' students regardless of their family income.
- **Offers innovative solutions to address rising college costs.** We appreciate your efforts to examine rising college costs – an issue of great concern to so many parents and students across the country. In particular, we support your proposals to reduce the costs associated with student loans and expand the HOPE Scholarship Tax Credit. These changes will make more funds available to students to pay postsecondary education costs. At the same time, your bill takes an innovative look at ways to slow the growth in tuition. Recognizing that states are cutting higher education budgets at alarming rates, we look forward to working with you on ideas such as maintenance of effort provisions and convening a College Costs Summit.
- **Provides additional support for low-income and minority students seeking postsecondary education.** Your proposals to expand GEAR-Up, TRIO, and LEAP will make a real difference in helping low-income and minority students start and finish postsecondary education. In addition, creating new graduate opportunities at minority serving institutions will help to address the gap in postsecondary education achievement by minorities. We look forward to working with you to ensure that low-income and minority students have the resources and support they need to succeed in postsecondary education
- **Expands efforts to ensure high quality teacher education.** NEA supports your proposed expansion of HEA's Title II teacher quality provisions. The increased funding would go a long way

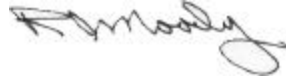
toward providing high quality teacher education that would, in turn, help ensure that all teachers in our nation's public schools are highly qualified. Further, the bill contains innovative suggestions for mentoring, linking community colleges to four-year teacher preparation programs, and training paraprofessionals. We support these initiatives and look forward to working closely with you to ensure their inclusion in final legislation.

NEA is encouraged by your thoughtful and innovative approach to reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. We support the goals of the College Quality, Affordability and Diversity Improvement Act and look forward to working further with you and your staff on the details and strategies for successful passage.

Sincerely,



Diane Shust
Director of Government Relations



Randall Moody
Manager of Federal Policy and Politics