



NC Justice Center

Opportunity and Prosperity for All

April 7, 2010

Governor Bev Perdue
Office of the Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

Dear Governor Perdue,

North Carolina's community college system has a long history of preparing students young and old for participation in the state's economy. Community colleges have played a particularly important role as North Carolina's economy has transformed and, more recently, stalled. As demand for more skills and education are required for living wage jobs, access to an affordable education at community colleges will be increasingly important.

Unfortunately, at the time of greatest need, North Carolina's community colleges have become more expensive. Tuition has increased more than 17 percent since 2005 and the latest legislation to pass out of the General Assembly will remove a critical tool that makes a community college education affordable: access to the federal loan program.

We are writing to urge you to veto House Bill 7 and Senate Bill 74.

House Bill 7 and Senate Bill 74 would allow community college campuses to opt-out of the federal loan program. Nearly half of the students at community colleges do not have access to the program because their campuses don't offer the product. Without access to federal loans, many students will have to put their tuition on high-interest credit cards, and that debt could hamper their ability to contribute to the state's economy for years to come.

The state's constitution reads that higher education should remain "free as far as practicable." Putting in place a barrier for students to access a federally funded program that can minimize the costs to the education that can lead to a family-sustaining job goes against the spirit of that vision. And that vision, of a more universal access to education, is of ever-greater importance as North Carolina aims to compete globally with a workforce prepared for the jobs of the future.

Please contact Bill Rowe at bill@ncjustice.org or 919-856-2177 to discuss your position further or to set up a meeting with us regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

Bill Rowe
Director of Advocacy, N.C. Justice Center

Gene Nichol
Professor of Law, UNC-Chapel Hill