

# News release from **BARNEY FRANK** Congressman, 4th District, Massachusetts

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## **Rep. Frank Calls for Repeal of Unfair Ban on Financial Aid**

*The RISE Act Would Repeal Ban Against Students Who Have Drug Offenses*

WASHINGTON—During a press conference held today, Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) and a coalition of Members of Congress and education and civil rights groups called for the repeal of a federal law that prevents college students who have minor drug convictions from receiving federal financial aid.

The law, which is part of the Higher Education Act, forbids students with minor drug offenses from receiving federal loans and grants to further their educations. However, there is no blanket ban against students who were convicted of other crimes. Rep. Frank has introduced the Removing Impediments to Students' Education (RISE) Act [H.R. 1184] to repeal the unfair law.

“The law discriminates against those who most often apply for college financial aid—minority and low-income students,” Rep. Barney Frank said. “Students who have drug convictions but come from families that don’t need financial aid aren’t affected by this law. I don’t condone illegal drug use and believe that someone who commits a violent offense or is a major drug trafficker should be denied financial aid. But, preventing students with minor convictions from being able to pursue an education is counterproductive and excessive.”

Under the law, which took effect in 2000, students convicted of drug possession are denied financial aid eligibility for one year after conviction for a first offense, two years for a second offense, and permanently for a third offense. Students convicted of selling drugs lose eligibility for two years after a first offense and permanently after a second offense. Students can regain their eligibility upon successful completion of a drug rehabilitation program.

More than 50 Members of Congress have cosponsored the RISE Act. The bill also has the support of the NAACP, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Students for Sensible Drug Policy, Faces and Voices of Recovery, and the United States Student Association.

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