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HB09-1290, Student Financial Aid National Guard

Independent Higher Education of Colorado respectfully opposes HB09-1290, Student Financial Aid National Guard. HB1290 increases the amount of money that may be allocated to members of the National Guard from \$650,000 to \$800,000. This money is the first to be paid from the need-based financial aid appropriated by the legislature.

We find that this bill poses a real dilemma placing two equally important groups of students in competition for financial resources. These two groups are members of the National Guard and low-income students in need of financial assistance. We believe, however, that low-income students should be given priority and that the money appropriated for need-based financial aid remains dedicated to this purpose.

- The legislature should be commended for focusing on need-based student financial aid when increases have been possible in the past. But still, Colorado does not have a particularly robust financial aid program. Any reduction in need-based aid just undermines the program.
- State leaders have declared that they want to increase enrollment and completion rates in postsecondary education significantly in the next few years. A major impediment to participation in postsecondary education for low-income students is financial need. Continuing to erode the pool of money available to these students will not help achieve the state goal.

We base our opposition, then, on the funding source, not on the goal of the bill.

Toni Larson
Executive Director