

Washington, D.C. -- Today, Congressman Joe Courtney sat down with students, faculty, and administration officials at UConn to discuss his legislation to prevent an increase in Stafford student loan rates for undergraduate students. The discussion included personal stories from students facing tens of thousands of dollars in debt after graduation.

"The debt discussion is really important because students don't pay attention to it early enough. It was great to have Congressman Courtney here to continue the conversation and advocate for students," said Allison Schillinger UCONN Freshman from Mystic, Connecticut and CONNPIRG member.

Courtney has long supported efforts to reduced Stafford student loans rates, beginning with his work to pass the College Cost Reduction and Access Act in 2007 which lowered rates over a four year period from 6.8% to 3.4%. He has also worked to pass legislation that would cap student loan payments at 10% of income after college and that would forgive loans on which payments have been made after 20 years.

Congressman Courtney's current legislation (H. R. 3826) would freeze Stafford student loan rates at the current level of 3.4%, preventing an increase to 6.8% that is scheduled to go in to effect on July 1, 2012. The legislation, which has 75 cosponsors, has been referred to the House Education and Workforce Committee for consideration. Courtney has partnered with Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), who has sponsored identical legislation (S. 2051) in the Senate, on this effort.

Congressman Courtney has been a leading voice in Congress for providing increased assistance to college students through Pell grants and student loans. In 2011, Courtney was chosen by the American Association of University Professors as the Henry T. Yost Legislator of the Year, an award given to a member of Congress who champions higher education issues. Courtney was nominated by AAUP members in Connecticut in part for his leadership to reduced student loan rates and increase financial assistance for students in need.

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