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February 17, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

The rising cost of a college education is a serious concern for many Americans. It was estimated that between 2001 and 2010, 4.4 million academically qualified students may opt to not enroll in a four-year university due to costs, and two million of them will forgo college entirely because the costs are beyond their reach. Families and students are relying more and more on student loans to pay for college, with the number of students obtaining loans doubling over the last ten years.

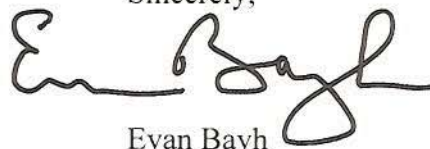
The economic downturn has placed an even greater strain on the ability of families to afford the rising cost of college. Rising unemployment means too many families have been forced to make difficult and painful sacrifices to make ends meet, including the extent to which they can help save for, and finance, their children's post-secondary education.

These troubling realities explain why there is broad support for reforming the student loan system in a way that will generate savings that can be used to support fiscally responsible investments in Pell Grants and other student aid. In the long-term, it is clear that these reforms will help create jobs. After all, the unemployment rate for people with some level of college attainment is half what it is for those with no more than a high school diploma.

I do, however, have concerns about the short-term impact reform efforts could have on employment in Indiana. Making college affordable for low and middle income families is an essential part of our economic recovery, but so is both creating new jobs and protecting those we have. These two equally important policy goals need not be in conflict with one another. I will not support any proposal that does not strike the right balance.

I look forward to discussing these issues with you in greater detail and working in a bipartisan way to enact these important reforms. If your staff has any questions, please have them contact Jonathan Stahler (Bayh) at 224-5623.

Sincerely,



Evan Bayh