



MISSOURI SENATE

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Sen. Coleman Has Concerns Over Omnibus Higher Education Bill

JEFFERSON CITY— Although it is clear that Missouri's system of higher education is in dire need of reform, Senate Minority Leader Maida Coleman, D-St. Louis, feels that the comprehensive bill recently introduced to fundamentally alter the state's higher education policies has too many holes to garner her full-fledged support.

The Senate Education Committee, of which Coleman is a member, heard over four hours of testimony this week on Senate Bill 389. The legislation contains multiple, disparate provisions, including the authorization of the governor's plan to liquidate a large portion of MOHELA's assets, which provided the most controversy.

"Missouri students benefit from having an independent, non-profit, financially viable higher education loan authority," Coleman said. "MOHELA offers loans to Missouri students at below-market rates and eliminates loan repayment in certain circumstances. But if this bill passes — regardless of the spin coming from the governor's office — one thing is certain: six years from now, MOHELA will have spent \$350 million less on making college more affordable for Missourians."

Coleman is also concerned with a provision in the bill that removes any oversight of the state's private higher education institutions from current law. "Why remove the private institutions from the coordinating board's oversight authority when the state is sending private school students more aid under this bill?" asked Coleman. "It looks to me that this bill will only hold public universities and colleges accountable."

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The bill also caps tuition rates at public higher education institutions at the rise in the Midwestern Consumer Price Index (CPI). “The use of the Midwestern CPI guarantees that Missouri’s higher education system will not be able to compete in the global market in attracting world-class professors and researchers,” Coleman said. “How are we going to fill these new buildings with cutting-edge researchers when we are tying the hands of higher education institutions?”

Coleman said that as of now, there are many kinks to work out before she will back this legislation. The bill will most likely be voted on in committee next week.

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