

Senators reintroduce bipartisan legislation to improve accountability of foreign medical schools receiving federal student aid

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WASHINGTON - U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA) joined U. S. Representatives Michael Burgess (R-TX) and Elijah Cummings (D-MD) to

reintroduce bipartisan, bicameral legislation that would protect students and taxpayers by closing a loophole that gives special treatment to a small number of overseas medical schools.

The *Foreign Medical School Accountability Fairness Act* would require all medical schools outside of the U.S. and Canada to meet the same minimum requirements to receive Title IV student aid dollars. Currently, some overseas medical schools are exempt from meeting the minimum standards to which other foreign medical schools are held: that at least 60% of their enrollment must be non-U.S. citizens or permanent residents and that students have at least a 75% pass rate on the U.S. Medical Licensing Exam. Three of the exempted schools – all for-profits in the Caribbean – account for nearly three-fourths of the federal student aid going to all foreign medical schools – more than \$588 million.

“The loophole in current law allows a small number of medical schools in the Caribbean to masquerade as foreign schools while profiting from a business model that relies on American students and U.S. taxpayer-funded student aid,” said Senator Durbin. “They can’t have it both ways. Our bill would bring much-needed accountability to for-profit medical schools in the Caribbean for taxpayers and help ensure that American students receive a quality education that prepares them to practice medicine in the United States.”

“This bill protects taxpayer dollars and ensures that all medical schools are held to the same standards,” said Senator Bill Cassidy M.D.

“This is about leveling the playing field and improving student quality,” said Representative Burgess. “If medical schools outside the U.S. are going to receive federal money, they need to meet the standards of education those taxpayer dollars were meant to fund. We must close this loophole to disallow foreign schools from accessing huge amounts of federal dollars at the expense of education and doctor quality.”

“This important piece of legislation would put an end to unfair special treatment of schools that deliver substandard outcomes while exploiting the students who only seek to improve their lives through education,” said Congressman Cummings. “We must put an end to the predatory practices of those institutions that put profit above educational excellence.”

Tuition costs at these offshore medical schools are generally higher than at U.S. medical schools. They are also much less likely than U.S. medical schools to ensure students’ successful completion of the program. The average attrition rate at U.S. medical schools is 3.4% while rates at for-profit foreign medical schools have been known to reach 30%. Students who do graduate do so with much more debt and a much lower likelihood of finding a residency, which is mandatory for practicing medicine in the

United States. In 2016, foreign-trained, American graduates had a residency match rate of 54 percent compared to 94 percent of graduates of U.S. medical schools.

The *Foreign Medical School Accountability Fairness Act* is supported by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine.