



For Immediate Release

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## **Statement of Michael B. Enzi**

### **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

#### **Emerging Risk? An Overview of the Federal Investment in For-Profit Education**

**June 24, 2010**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today's hearing on for-profit institutions of higher education comes at an important time. These schools are increasingly reaching more and more Americans who are not served by traditional higher education. They are an essential part of our efforts to provide every American with the skills necessary to be a valuable part of the workforce. As Secretary Duncan recently said, "Let me be crystal clear: for-profit institutions play a vital role in training young people and adults for jobs. They are critical to helping America meet the President's 2020 goal. They are helping us meet an ever increasing demand for skills that public institutions cannot always meet."

To understand the for-profit sector, we must first get a better understanding of the variety of institutions in it and the diversity of the students they serve. As our witness will demonstrate, many for-profit schools resemble the traditional 4- and 2-year colleges, where students receive associates, bachelors and masters degrees in fields such as business, nursing, and engineering. Many others are less familiar to us, but provide the educated and skilled workforce that we rely on each day. Among these are auto mechanic, truck driving, and beauty schools. Many more provide courses online, providing working adults and rural communities access to college credit they once did not have because of time constraints or distances they would have to travel to attend.

In general the students at each of these schools tend to be older, lower-income, and more likely to be minorities. Many have already spent years in the workforce and return to school in order to change careers. Others seek to improve their skills in order to advance in their current jobs. And as is often the case in today's economy, many have been laid off and are looking to gain skills that will make them more attractive to employers.

Thousands of students have chosen for-profit schools because they offer the flexibility in scheduling and training not readily available at traditional institutions of higher

education. Furthermore, these institutions provide thousands of students with a valuable education that lead to productive and rewarding careers.

Unfortunately, as in other industries, there are bad actors in the for-profit sector. As we all have undoubtedly read, and will hear about in the Inspector General's testimony, some for-profit schools have attempted to game the system in order to gain access to more federal aid dollars. These schools have recruited at homeless shelters, misrepresented the quality of the education their students receive, and made unrealistic promises of high paying jobs upon completion. Such actions are simply unacceptable and I applaud Secretary Duncan's commitment to ending this kind of behavior.

However, in combating this behavior, it is essential that we use a scalpel and not a machete. Whatever protections are put in place must eliminate bad actors and ensure that we do not unintentionally harm students in legitimate programs.

Finally, I want to express my disappointment that we did not have the opportunity to work together in preparing this hearing. Over the last several years, the HELP Committee has had a successful history of bipartisan cooperation that has made it one of the most productive committees in the Senate despite the often divergent views of its members. Mr. Chairman, when Senator Alexander and I wrote you asking for hearings on the Department of Education's proposed regulations, it was our sincere hope that we could work together in the spirit of this bipartisan tradition. That is not the case with this hearing and I am concerned that this hearing will not provide members with a full and objective understanding of all the issues facing the for-profit sector. I am also concerned that it might set a precedent for future hearings on this issue as well as others before the committee.

Therefore, I would like to request that you commit to working together on future hearings that you hold on this issue. In doing so, we will ensure that Members of this Committee have a full understanding of all the issues so that our nation's students are well served and quality programs are available to meet their needs. Thank you.