

Friday, April 27, 2012

*Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico’s Third District released the following statement today after voting against a Republican bill that eliminates funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund in order to offset the cost of preventing an increase in interest rates on need-based student loans for one year.*

“A higher education is the key to unlocking opportunities for New Mexico’s young adults. In this increasingly global economy and in the face of challenging economic times, a college degree or career training is essential to get ahead and succeed. It is critical that we do all that we can to put a higher education in reach for more young adults and give them the opportunity to get an education that allows them to follow their dreams.

“Unfortunately, House Republicans used this legislation as an opportunity to attack efforts to improve the health and well-being of women and their children. Republicans’ decision to pay for the cost of lower interest rates by eliminating a program that funds breast and cervical cancer screening for women and immunizations for children jeopardizes efforts to promote stronger and healthier communities and make health care more accessible and affordable. Republicans have called these investments in health care a ‘slush fund,’ but for the women who rely on the vital health screenings they provide, it’s a matter of survival.

“While this bill reverses course from the House Republican budget that had planned to allow interest rates to double and slash Pell Grants – all while cutting taxes for millionaires and billionaires – it now pits the needs of students against those of women and children. Preventing this interest rate increase that will affect 7 million low- and middle-income students nationwide and nearly 40,000 students in New Mexico should be a top priority that deserves a bipartisan solution, not a choice between the health of women and children and the future of New Mexico’s students.”

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