

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

September 5, 2007

Dr. Linda Byrd-Johnson
Acting Director
Office of Federal TRIO Programs
Higher Education Programs
Office of Postsecondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, N.W., Suite 7000
Washington, DC 20006-8510

Dear Acting Director Byrd-Johnson:

We are writing to again request that the U.S. Department of Education consider the application of Choice Thru Education, Inc. for continued Upward Bound funding. We have individually written to Department of Education about this matter in recent months, and have not received any response.

Choice Thru Education ("Choice"), a non-profit organization located in Chelsea, Massachusetts, has run the area's Upward Bound program for the last 40 years. For thousands of young people in Chelsea, the Upward Bound program has literally changed their lives. As you know, the Upward Bound program offers support to our Commonwealth's neediest students who would otherwise go without, and helps them successfully pursue higher education. Specifically, the program offers academic instruction, tutoring, counseling, mentoring, cultural enrichment and work-study programs. Students are offered a specially designed and positively influenced support system which both enables and empowers them to develop the necessary self-respect and self-esteem to make the important decisions for a positive future.

As you may know, Choice had difficulty submitting their proposal for continued Upward Bound funding due to technical problems with the Grants.gov system. The Grants.gov site was down the Saturday and Sunday prior to the deadline when Choice first sent their completed proposal. Choice received a receipt stating that the application had been received, and only later learned that their application had not been received, despite the confirmation they had been given. The Department of Education then extended the deadline for all Upward Bound applicants until the following Tuesday due to the technical problems with Grants.gov. Choice, once again, submitted the proposal electronically and it failed to go through a second time. Meanwhile, Choice submitted a printed copy of the proposal which was date and time stamped prior to the deadline. On Tuesday, Choice continued to try to submit their proposal electronically, and it was finally successfully submitted at 5:16 p.m. Even though the deadline was extended until Tuesday, the Department of Education refused to review Choice's application due to its "late submission."


We appreciate the difficulty of making these funding decisions. However, constituents – and the students they serve – should not be penalized because of computer glitches that are beyond their control. Choice did everything in their power to submit their application in a timely fashion, and the difficulties encountered were completely out of their hands. We urge you to consider Choice’s application for Upward Bound funding on the merits. We feel confident that once you have done so, you will provide continued Upward Bound funding to this worthy organization.

With respect and appreciation,



Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senator

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry
United States Senator



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Cc: Secretary Margaret Spellings, U.S. Department of Education