

# **Rubio to Federal Department of Education:** **End Baseless Probe into Florida Bright** **Futures Scholarship**

U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) requested the U.S. Department of Education end its baseless investigation into the Florida Bright Futures scholarship program, articulating the program's fundamental function to assist promising students with rising costs of higher education based solely on merit.

In a letter to Assistant Secretary Catherine Lhamon, Rubio condemns any forced bureaucratic changes to the Bright Futures program, which would render the program financially unstable and undermine the purpose of the scholarship. Rubio points to the federally funded Pell Grant program as a means to financially assist low-income students with need-based grants.

Rubio said imposing arbitrary rules and exceptions to the standards set for Bright Futures degrades the very fundamental purpose of the scholarship.

The full text of the letter is below.

May 16, 2014

Ms. Catherine Lhamon  
Assistant Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-1100

Dear Assistant Secretary Lhamon,

I am writing to formally request you end your baseless investigation into the Florida Bright Futures scholarship program. This is a race-blind merit-based program that supports Florida's most promising students. The U.S. Department of Education has no legitimate legal basis for investigating such a program. Further, forcing bureaucratic changes in the parameters of eligibility for this scholarship would not only degrade the fundamental purpose of this scholarship, but also render the program financially unstable.

As you know, Florida's Bright Futures scholarships were created to assist Florida's most promising students with the increasing cost of higher education through profit generated by the Florida Lottery. Since its creation, this program has helped over 660,000 of Florida's brightest students receive in-state postsecondary education.

The Bright Futures scholarships are awarded solely on merit, which includes factors such as the students' high school completion, grade point average, test scores, service to their community, and a clean criminal record. The fundamental function of these scholarships is to assist Florida's most promising students based solely on merit.

I am acutely aware of the unfortunate reality that a student's circumstance can make the dream of obtaining a higher education more difficult. As a result, I am supportive of the federally funded Pell Grant program to assist low-income students with need-based grants. This grant program

was created with the specific function of promoting access to postsecondary education and, unlike the Bright Futures program, takes a student's financial circumstances into consideration when awarding grants.

Forcing bureaucratic changes to the Bright Futures program would jeopardize the financial solvency of the program. To the credit of the students of Florida, the standards and achievement levels have risen across the entire state, and the number of students eligible for the program has also increased. While I am proud of the strides Florida's students have made, the logical conclusion is that the standards of the program must rise with the achievements of our students.

For these reasons, I formally request you end your investigation of the Bright Futures program. This program has helped thousands of Florida's top students pay for the increasing cost of higher education and go on to be leaders in a large range of industries throughout Florida and the nation. To impose arbitrary rules and exceptions to the standards degrades the fundamental purpose of the scholarship. Unnecessary intervention by the Department of Education threatens the long-term sustainability of this program and will be damaging to the future of many of Florida's most promising students. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,  
Marco Rubio  
United States Senator

*Editor's Note:*

This letter from Sen. Rubio contains an all important criteria for the future of this country. Please support Sen. Rubio and all others that still realize that "socializing" our students down to a common worker-bee mentality is the beginning of the end of American society, ingenuity and courage as we have always known it to be. Not everyone wins! Those that persevere, apply themselves and don't give up – do win. Education is not about pleasing the students; it is about training them for the future. That training sometimes is uncomfortable and hurts – but in the end they learn to quit taking offense (The Bait of Satan) at their failures, learn from the failures, apply themselves and move on to improve not only their skills but most of all, their character. Character is the prize in the end as we use the learned skills in our lives. Cheating erases character and the Department of Education is cheating hard working students of their just due for working hard.

It is starting to look like that might just be the point of this whole thing. Break down the 'fight for right' in a person and their character can slip into a passive give-up mentality, especially in the youth. Then the automaton society just passively exists until the end. Those of us who are too old to give up the 'fight for right' have to persevere to give that great gift to our future generations. If you have never had to fight for something – now is the time to re-enlist for the cause – We have only just begun to fight!

Kathy Hilliard  
Editor