

November 20, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

We write today to urge you to extend the current suspension of payment and zero percent interest for federal student loan borrowers, as well as the suspension of collections on defaulted loans.

You authorized these critical borrower relief measures in March, which were subsequently included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act with an expiration of September 30, 2020. In August, the administration extended the measures through December 31, 2020. As this deadline rapidly approaches, we ask you to extend this important relief until December 31, 2021, or until the federal government formally declares an end to the pandemic, whichever occurs first.

Since the implementation of this relief last March, the economic circumstances of borrowers have scarcely changed. In fact, with the recent nationwide resurgence of COVID-19, the already-high unemployment rate is likely to increase. Bringing millions of Americans back into repayment in the thick of this crisis will cause additional financial hardship and force borrowers to make difficult decisions about their limited resources. Simply stated, borrowers who continue to be financially impacted by the pandemic need more time to get back on their feet in the form of extended relief from required repayments coupled with zero percent interest. This is especially true for the thousands of students who have recently entered repayment after withdrawing without a degree because of the pandemic.

Finally, we are only six weeks away from when this relief expires. This is not nearly enough time for borrowers to adjust their finances accordingly, especially during a time of such volatility, nor is it enough time to prepare the infrastructure for millions of borrowers resuming payments at once. When overall financial conditions finally do improve, it is critically important to ensure all borrowers have a smooth transition to resuming their repayments to avoid any subsequent spike in defaults. This includes a comprehensive communications plan beginning two months prior to repayments resuming, as the CARES Act required for the initial September 30, 2020, deadline.

We applauded your decision in March and Congress' subsequent inclusion of these important borrower relief provisions in the CARES Act. We urge you to extend this relief that borrowers continue to need desperately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ted" being more prominent than the last name "Mitchell".

Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream

ACPA - College Student Educators International

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

American Association of Community Colleges

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Association of University Professors

American Council on Education

American Dental Education Association

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

APPA - Leadership in Educational Facilities

Association of American Colleges & Universities

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of American Universities

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Association of Community College Trustees

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources

Common App

Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area

Council for Advancement and Support of Education

Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Council for Opportunity in Education

Council of Graduate Schools

Council of Independent Colleges

Council on Social Work Education

EDUCAUSE

Higher Education Consultants Association

Higher Education Loan Coalition

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Collegiate Athletic Association
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Thurgood Marshall College Fund

cc:

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
The Honorable Bobby Scott
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Virginia Foxx