

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 9, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to take action to extend the student payment pause – including zero percent interest – through the end of the public health emergency and to work with Congress to continue providing zero percent interest. The pause on federal student loan payments has been essential for the financial wellbeing of student loan borrowers. However, we cannot continue to rely on this short-term solution to address the student debt crisis. Instead, we encourage you to work with Congress to develop a long-term plan to support student loan holders.

Eliminating federal interest would grant borrowers desperately needed relief as we continue to face flat wages and record inflation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Millions of Americans are crushed by student debt, causing them to delay major life decisions, such as starting a family, buying a house or launching a business. In a recent national survey conducted by the Student Borrower Protection Center and Data for Progress, 65 percent of respondents with student debt expected to make “major changes to saving or spending” if payments resume and nearly 4-in-10 borrowers are “not confident at all” in their ability to manage a student loan payment, while just 1-in-5 borrowers are “very confident.”

The Department of Education found that nation-wide federal borrowers have saved \$5 billion each month since they stopped accruing interest on their federal student loans from the federal student loan payment pause. The current interest rates for Direct Subsidized and Direct Unsubsidized Loans are 3.73 percent for undergraduate students and the average student loan debt for undergraduate students is \$28,950. Maintaining the interest rate at zero percent would save the average borrower \$576 a year, giving borrowers a fighting chance to pay back their loans and participate in the economy.

The Administration has the authority to act by extending the student loan interest waiver under Section 2(a)(1) Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students (HEROES) Act of 2003. The Administration should extend the student payment pause through the end of the national emergency and then work with Congress to ensure that zero percent interest is carried forward. We ask that you champion legislation that has been introduced in Congress to make permanent the zero percent interest rate for federal student loans. This would ensure that every student loan borrower has a fair chance to pay off their principal balance without accumulating burdensome interest charges. In addition, zero percent interest would help alleviate the burden of student

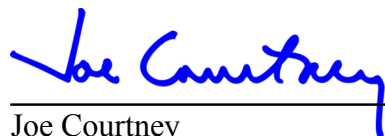
debt, giving borrowers the financial stability they need to be successful in the post-pandemic economy.

We appreciate your continued commitment on behalf of student loan borrowers during these unprecedented and challenging times. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



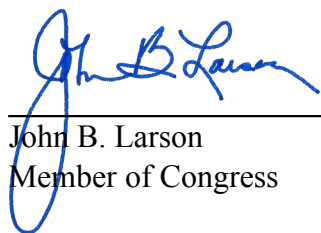
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
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Troy Carter
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



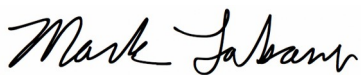
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



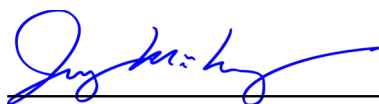
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



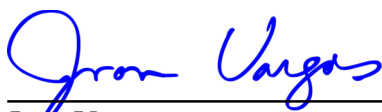
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Marie Newman
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



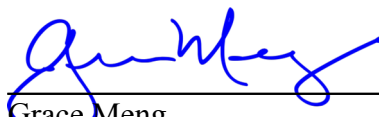
Juan Vargas
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Dwight Evans
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Grace Meng
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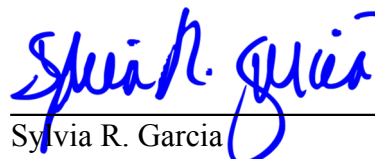
Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
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Sylvia R. Garcia
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Carolyn B. Maloney
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John Yarmuth
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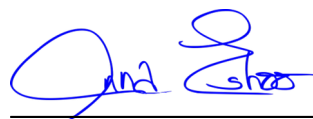
J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



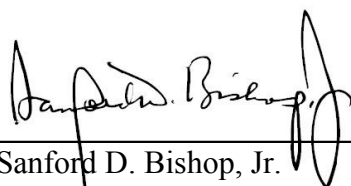
Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Ted Lieu
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress