

May 14, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
US House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
US House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James P. McGovern
Chairman
Committee on Rules
US House of Representatives
H-312, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Scott and Chairman McGovern,

We write to applaud you for including student debt cancellation in the HR 6800, the “Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions” (HEROES) Act. We urge you to ensure that this critical relief remains in the legislative package without change or reduction.

As Congress works to better protect Americans from the economic fallout of COVID-19, the financial difficulties of 44 million student loan borrowers and the effect of this debt on the economy cannot be forgotten. The relief in HEROES, especially the \$10,000 of cancellation per borrower, will have a significant impact on low-income borrowers and borrowers of color. Student debt exacerbates existing systemic inequities and racial disparities, preventing recovery from extending to already marginalized groups who are still reeling from the effects of the Great Recession even as they navigate the worst of the COVID-19 health crisis. Previous relief packages, including the CARES Act, fell far short of providing full relief for hard-working families across the country, especially for veterans, older adults, and low- and moderate-income families, and communities of color who are getting hit hard by this pandemic and were already struggling most with student debt.

Student loan borrowers are the medical personnel providing life-saving care to Covid-19 patients, the school teachers learning to educate their students online, and millions of essential workers who are helping to keep this country running. Many borrowers will also face extended periods of unemployment and lost productivity beyond the 6-month suspension period provided for some borrowers in the CARES Act. For many, making regular student loan payments was already a struggle. The national financial impacts of this crisis will only exacerbate their inability to pay. Moreover, payment suspension was least helpful to borrowers of color who are more likely to have \$0 payments than their white peers.

By cancelling \$10,000 in debt per borrower, Congress will relieve the loan burden of the majority of borrowers who are currently in default, and seriously help the household budgets of millions of others. Cancellation will enable these borrowers to emerge from this crisis ready to fully participate in the new economy – whether purchasing homes, starting small businesses, or simply being better positioned to spend money in their community as businesses and restaurants reopen. This is an effective and efficient way to provide relief to communities that needed it most. We urge you to continue fighting for these communities by maintaining and passing the full student debt relief package currently in HEROES.

Sincerely,

Hilary O. Shelton
Senior Vice President
NAACP

Mike Calhoun
President
Center for Responsible Lending

Janet Murguía
President and CEO
UnidosUS

Vanita Gupta
President and CEO
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League