

April 4, 2016

The Honorable Judy Chu  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2423 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Chu:

The Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) writes in support of H.R. 4223, the *Protecting Our Students by Terminating Graduate Rates that Add to Debt Act* (POST GRAD Act), which would reinstate graduate and professional student eligibility for Federal Direct Subsidized Loans.

FASHP was created in 1968 as a forum for representatives of health professions education institutions to address education's role in organizational patterns of health care; to encourage effective collaboration among the professions in education and practice; to prepare health professions education for the future; and to serve as a liaison with other organizations sharing an interest in health professions education.

We applaud your leadership in introducing legislation that recognizes and addresses the need for federal financial aid for graduate and professional students to include health professions students to help finance and support them in the completion of their education. In particular, as the nation faces a health care workforce shortage, it is critical to educate and sustain a future health care workforce that will be able to collectively meet the nation's evolving and emerging health care needs. Amid the growing and aging population increasingly seeking treatment for chronic conditions while insurance coverage expands across the nation, it is imperative that federal policies support the educational pathway of the future health care workforce. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care industry is expected to be the most rapidly growing sector in employment, projecting a 19 percent growth from 2014 to 2024, which would add 2.3 million new jobs in this industry.<sup>1</sup>

However, as you know, existing restrictions for health professions students in federal financial aid policies do not align with the urgency of this impending reality. Furthermore, these students have been adversely affected by the elimination of the in-school interest subsidy in the *Budget Control Act of 2011*, as the Congressional Budget Office estimates that this exclusion will increase graduate and professional students' aggregate debt burden by \$18.1 billion in approaching years.

The *POST GRAD Act* would help address these and other challenges intrinsic to health professions students' career pathways. As you know, health professions students graduate with relatively high debt compared to other graduate students, which could deter individuals from seeking these advanced degrees in the future. Unlike other career paths, the high debt burden of health professions education is frequently compounded by years of post-graduate training, which

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm>

is required for certain professionals to practice independently. As a result, student total loan repayment often exceeds two to three times the amount borrowed.

Again, we thank you for championing robust federal financial aid policies such as the *POST GRAD Act* on behalf of the nation's health professions students and look forward to our continued work together on this important matter.

Sincerely,

American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine  
American Dental Education Association  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Association of Chiropractic Colleges  
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry  
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of University Programs in Health Administration  
Physician Assistant Education Association  
Council on Social Work Education