



The Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP)

Supporting the Graduate PLUS Loan Program and the Future Health Care Workforce

The Federal Direct Graduate PLUS (Grad PLUS) Loan Program, authorized under Title IV of the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (HEA), makes available loans to health professions and other graduate and professional students to help finance their training up to the total cost of their education. For many of these students, Grad PLUS loans make it possible to pursue a career in health care to provide necessary services for our nation's patients.

FASHP strongly urges Congress to maintain the current structure and eligibility of the Grad PLUS Loan Program. We recognize the true value of supporting graduate education policies and stand united in strong support of this important program critical to our health care system.

With almost one-third of health professions students borrowing Grad PLUS loans¹, this federal program is vital to the future health care workforce's ability to finance their current training and education. Eliminating or limiting this federal support would impose acute burdens on these students, and hospitals and clinics could struggle to hire enough health care professionals, particularly in rural and underserved areas, ultimately exacerbating the workforce shortage and detrimentally impacting the public health of the country. Furthermore, it could inevitably force health professions students to take out private loans that typically have higher interest rates and limited repayment options, continuing to increase their student debt burden.

Additionally, Grad PLUS loan borrowers do not have high repayment default rates. In fact, graduate student loan borrowers typically have much lower rates of default on their Grad PLUS loans, at 2 percent compared to other types of student borrowers.² Limiting this federal support that current health professions students heavily rely on to finance their education does not make sense as data shows that these students adeptly manage and pay back these loans.

Therefore, we urge Congress to uphold federal policies that support students who pursue a health professions education, not dissuade them. The Grad PLUS Loan Program is vital to retain and recruit a health professions workforce that will be able to collectively meet the growing health care needs and challenges of our nation.

¹ Government Accountability Office. (2018). *Higher Education: Characteristics of Graduate PLUS Borrowers*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-392R>.

² Ibid.

About FASHP

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 liaison with other organizations sharing an interest in health professions education. FASHP is comprised of 16 associations representing a health professions education community that includes 4,786 programs, institutions, hospitals, and health systems, and more than 1.4 million students, faculty, clinicians, administrators, residents, and researchers.

In particular, FASHP advocates appropriate support for Federal programs under the Public Health Service Act's Titles VII (health professions) and VIII (nursing workforce) and loan and scholarship programs for health professions programs in that Act that educate health professionals, and motivate service in underserved communities. These programs are not a major Federal expenditure, but they provide critical support for improvements in health professions training for a more patient-centered, team-based health care system and increased access to primary care. The member organizations of FASHP stand ready to be a resource and to work individually and collectively with Federal and State leaders, policymakers and others on health professions education policy.

FASHP Member Organizations

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

Liaison Members:

American Psychological Association
American Physical Therapy Association