

June 1, 2017

Honorable Judy Chu
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Chu:

The undersigned organizations and affiliates of the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) are writing to express our support for HR 2526, Protecting Our Students by Terminating Graduate Rates that Add to Debt Act or POST GRAD Act.

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 health 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.

As you know, past changes in federal policy have increased the debt burden for graduate students, complicating their path to attaining an advanced degree. Graduate students face higher interest rates, no longer receive an interest subsidy and have a prolonged loan repayment period under some repayment plans. Access to and completion of a graduate degree has become more daunting for low-income first-generation students. Your legislation recognizes the need to grow federal financial support for graduate and professional students, including health profession students and helps these students finance their education, better ensuring their completion and success.

Our nation faces a shortage of healthcare professionals and a strong federal role is critical to educating and sustaining a future health care workforce that will collectively meet the nation's evolving and emerging health care needs. Amid the growing and aging population increasingly seeking treatment for chronic conditions, it is imperative that federal policies support the educational pathways 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 2014-2024, which would add 2.3 million new jobs in the industry. Further adding to this urgency, each state in our nation has a health profession shortage area designation in primary care, dental health and mental health care.

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

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

FASHP looks forward to working with you to highlight the vital role education plays in equipping the nation with highly-trained health care professionals. Higher levels of debt can create barriers for students with limited means from pursuing graduate and professional degrees and we applaud your work on POST GRAD as it will lessen the loan debt for qualified students and help our nation develop a diverse, professional health care workforce that is prepared to provide Americans with access to high-quality health care services.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you on this important legislation.

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 Physical Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
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
Council on Social Work Education
Physician Assistant Education Association