

October 24, 2022

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

Thank you, on behalf of the 12 million dedicated public service employees our unions represent, for your work to address our nation's student debt crisis, including the Public Service Loan Forgiveness limited waiver. Through the limited waiver, the loans of more than 211,000 military service members, educators, social workers, healthcare providers, public safety officers, and countless other public service employees have been forgiven, while nearly 1 million others have received an average of one additional year of PSLF credit.

Before the limited waiver, many borrowers were denied PSLF through no fault of their own, but because of incorrect information they were given, inaccurate recordkeeping, bad administration, and other issues. The limited waiver has reversed that trajectory and changed many lives. It has given families the ability to purchase homes, save for retirement, and improve their financial health in other ways. However, much more remains to be done. ***We are requesting that the limited waiver deadline of October 31 be extended through July 1, 2023.***

The PSLF program has been plagued with problems since the first borrowers became eligible for forgiveness in 2017. As recently as 2020, 96 percent of PSLF applicants were rejected for loan forgiveness, even though they had upheld their end of the bargain. The limited waiver has had a dramatic impact, particularly for women, who hold two-thirds of student loan debt, and for women of color, whose loan debt is highest. However, one year of temporary adjustments cannot make up for the years of PSLF's failure to deliver on its promise of loan forgiveness for those who have served their communities for 10 years or more.

Our unions have been contacting members through webinars, clinics and other means to educate them about the limited waiver, and our outreach is making a difference. Yet, there are many borrowers who remain unaware of the waiver. The Department of Education has information only from 1.3 million cumulative PSLF borrowers with eligible employment and positive loan balances, compared to the [9 million public service employees that the Student Borrower Protection Center has identified as potentially eligible to pursue forgiveness](#).

In addition, process issues with loan servicers—including inadequate communications and status updates—have prevented some public service employees from submitting PSLF applications.

The extension is crucial, considering that the Department will likely finalize in the next few days

sweeping regulations that are scheduled to take effect July 1 of next year and will improve federal student loan programs. Ending the limited waiver this month before those regulations go into effect could lead to confusion among borrowers and employers, and will simply return PSLF to its previous defective condition.

The last few years have been especially grueling for public service employees. Our nation has been gripped by a pandemic that has killed or sickened millions of Americans and affected every aspect of life. Throughout the crisis, public service employees have been doing the work upon which we all, especially the most vulnerable, rely.

We are continuing to work diligently to reach as many public service employees as possible. Extending the deadline for the waiver through July 1, 2023 will give more of them the opportunity to reap the benefits that they have earned and deserve.

Sincerely,

National Education Association
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) International
Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America
(UAW)
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Nonprofit Professional Employees Union, IFPTE Local 70
Service Employees International Union

CC:

Ambassador Susan Rice, Director, Domestic Policy Council
James Kvaal, Undersecretary, U.S. Department of Education
Richard Cordray, COO of Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education