

January 26, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your leadership to make college more affordable in order to expand opportunity and strengthen our economy. We appreciate that, in a time of intense budget pressures, your education reforms seek to maximize the return on taxpayer investment and eliminate waste, fraud and abuse. That is why we firmly support the Department of Education's prompt adoption of a strong and enforceable "gainful employment" rule. We urge you to issue a final rule now that will protect students and taxpayers no later than the start of the 2012-13 academic year.

Numerous investigations have revealed pervasive abuses by some career education programs: deceptive and aggressive recruiting of students; inflated job placement rates and false reporting to authorities; overstatement of a program's value and understatement of its high cost; and dismal completion rates. Too many of these programs are preying on low-income students, minority students, and veterans who are seeking to further their education and, by doing so, enhance their employment opportunities.

The proposed gainful employment rule implements requirements set by Congress and advances a common-sense principle: Federal financial aid shouldn't go to career education programs that consistently leave students buried in debt they cannot repay.

The subprime mortgage debacle and ensuing financial crisis taught our country a hard lesson about letting such abuses run rampant. You have an opportunity, right now, to make the right decision for our students and our economy by strengthening and finalizing this common-sense rule. We will support you every step of the way.

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of University Professors
American Association of University Women
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 3299
American Federation of Teachers
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
California Coalition for Civil Rights
Campaign for College Affordability
Campus Progress
Center for Law and Social Policy
Consumer Action
Council for Opportunity in Education
Crittenton Women's Union
Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action
The Education Trust
The Greenlining Institute
The Institute for College Access & Success and its Project on Student Debt
Institute for Higher Education Policy
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement

League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Momentum (formerly the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund)
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
NAACP
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)
National Consumers League
National Council of La Raza
National Education Association
Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project
Pride at Work
Public Advocates Inc.
Public Citizen
Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
U.S. PIRG
United States Student Association
Veterans of Modern Warfare
Young Invincibles

cc: The Honorable Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education
The Honorable Jacob “Jack” Lew, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Melody Barnes, Director, Domestic Policy Council
Valerie Jarrett, Senior White House Advisor
Gene Sperling, Director, National Economic Council