



July 1, 2021

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

Dear Congresswoman Chu:

The undersigned organizations of the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) are writing to express our support for the *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 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. FASHP is comprised of 18 associations representing a health professions education community that includes 7,429 programs, institutions, hospitals, and health systems, and more than 1.3 million students, faculty, clinicians, administrators, residents, and researchers.

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 increase federal financial support for graduate and professional students, including health professions students and helps these students finance their education, better ensuring their completion and success.

Our nation faces a shortage of health care 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. COVID-19 has highlighted the need to have a robust health workforce aimed at caring for vulnerable patients. Thus, 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 an 18 percent growth from 2016-2026, which would add 2.4 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 professions 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 the *POST GRAD Act* 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 to support this important legislation. For additional information, please contact Kenneth Polishchuk, Senior Director for Congressional and Federal Relations, American Psychological Association at kpolishchuk@apa.org.

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
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Chiropractic Colleges
Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of University Programs in Health Administration
Council on Social Work Education
Physician Assistant Education Association