Dear President Biden and Secretary Cardona,

In roughly 35 days, on September 1, 2022, tens of millions of federal student loan borrowers are scheduled to resume payments. Despite repeated reports and surveys concerning whether borrowers will be able to pay, we understand the Administration is considering restarting student loan payments at the end of August. We write today to urge you to extend the pause on student loan payments, given the numerous economic issues facing borrowers across the nation, as well as administrative actions in process by the Department of Education.

For over two years, the Department has provided critical flexibility to millions of federal student loan borrowers by pausing payments, as many have struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic. This much needed pause has helped many borrowers to keep a roof over their heads, secure childcare, and purchase food, health care, and medicine during the course of a pandemic responsible for the deaths of more than 1 million people in the U.S. For the first time, many borrowers have had the opportunity to pay down debt, open a savings account, purchase a home, and save for retirement—none of which would have been possible without the payment pause.

Resuming student loan payments would force millions of borrowers to choose between paying their federal student loans or putting a roof over their heads, food on the table, or paying for childcare and health care—while costs continue to rise and while yet another COVID-19 variant increases hospitalizations nationwide. Despite significant decreases over the last month, gas prices are still high, and many borrowers still have to pay exorbitant amounts each week in order to commute to their jobs. Food prices remain high, as suppliers contend with ongoing supply

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1 U.S. GOV’T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-22-104291; COVID-19: SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED FOR OVERSEEING RELIEF FUNDS AND LEADING RESPONSES TO PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES (2022), https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-22-105291/index.html#appendix8 (identifying that 50% of all federal student loan borrowers are at risk of delinquency when payments restart); CONSUMER FIN. PROT. BUREAU (CFPB), STUDENT LOAN BORROWERS POTENTIALLY AT-RISK WHEN PAYMENT SUSPENSION ENDS (Apr. 14, 2022), https://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/student-loan-borrowers-potentially-at-risk-payment-suspension-ends/ (finding that over 15 million borrowers have more than one risk factor that may cause them to struggle to make payments on their student loans).


4 See Danielle Douglas-Gabriel, What the Student Loan Payment Pause has Meant to Black Women, WASH. POST (Apr. 6, 2022), https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/04/03/black-women-student-loan-freeze/.

chain issues and the war in Ukraine.\textsuperscript{6} We still have a significant childcare crisis throughout the country, which has caused already-high costs to spike to 40% of their pre-pandemic levels.\textsuperscript{7} Low-income borrowers, Black and Brown borrowers, and women borrowers still face severe financial hardships as COVID-19 continues to infect individuals throughout the country and exacerbate existing inequities.\textsuperscript{8}

Moreover, resuming student loan payments at this moment would further complicate administrative actions already underway or contemplated by the Department—which could contribute to unnecessary confusion for borrowers in the upcoming months. Currently, many borrowers are in limbo as they await upcoming actions from the Department or their federal student loan servicer—either through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) waiver or through the one-time account adjustments announced by Ed on April 19, 2022 that would count past periods of forbearance or deferment.\textsuperscript{9}

Accordingly, we ask that the Administration continue to keep federal student loan payments paused.

Sincerely,

\begin{flushleft}
\textit{Charles E. Schumer} \\
\textit{United States Senator} \\
\textit{Robert Menendez} \\
\textit{United States Senator}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{quote}
(“For Americans, recent dramatic surges in gas prices and rent have increases the costs of daily life at a quicker rate than wages. Households with low incomes—who are disproportionally people of color—will likely be particularly affected by these changes.”).\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

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\textit{Matt Schulz}, \textit{U.S. Workers Spend Up to 29\% of their Income, on Average, on Child Care for Kids Younger than 5}, \textit{LENDING TREE} (Mar. 15, 2022), \url{https://www.lendingtree.com/debt-consolidation/child-care-costs-study/#annualcostspikeperchildforcenterbasedcareproviderasamidcoronaviruspandemic}.\textsuperscript{7}
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Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator
Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress
Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

André Carson  
Member of Congress

Troy Carter  
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Katherine M. Clark  
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress
Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Val Butler Demings  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress
Ruben Gallego  
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

Hakeem Jeffries  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
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Raul Ruiz
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress
Chair, Subcommittee on
Higher Education and
Workforce Investment