June 12, 2018

Dear Members of Congress:

As leaders of schools and programs of public health, we are writing to inform you of the importance of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, which serves a critical need by making it possible for graduates with educational debt to enter a career of public service. This program, enacted with bipartisan support during the George W. Bush Administration, has given Americans from every region of the country the ability to take and remain in critically important public health positions. Eligible public health positions include those with local, state, tribal and Federal public health agencies, and with some non-profit service providers, many of which carry salaries that are well below positions available to others with comparable graduate degrees in the private sector.

For far too many graduates, student loan debt is a barrier to pursuing fulfilling careers in public service that require a graduate degree. Public health agencies, in both urban and rural areas, have difficulty recruiting and retaining talented employees due to the lower salaries they can offer. By forgiving the remaining student loan debt of persons who have served ten years in qualified public service employment and made consistent payments on their eligible student loans, PSLF creates incentives for motivated and committed individuals to pursue careers in public service. The program has become an important tool for attracting and retaining talented individuals to work in critical jobs within their communities.

Without the PSLF, fewer individuals would pursue careers that are integral to the health and well-being of our society and would deprive many Americans of the public health professionals they need in important positions in their schools, hospitals, public health agencies, and communities. The PSLF program is an investment in our nation’s values of public service and community involvement.

Thank you for your consideration.

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