



May 25, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

As National President of the National Treasury Employees Union, I represent over 150,000 federal employees in 31 different agencies. Many of my members participate in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, and NTEU has been a strong proponent of this program. We strongly oppose the proposed elimination of the PSLF program. The justification for its elimination, contained in the administration's budget documents, indicates an unfortunate misunderstanding of the program. The program does not "unfairly favor some career choices over others." It makes possible a career helping others, a career based in public service, a career that would not be possible for lower and moderate income students. In our union, we have many lawyers and scientists who could make two or three times more money working in the private sector. But they believe that being a civil servant is a calling, and they feel fortunate to be able to work in the government, with lower pay, knowing that, at some point in the future, their student loans will be paid off.

What has not been explained is whether the government will honor its commitment to those already enrolled in the program. It would be not only unjust but dishonest for the Department to simply sweep all those in the PSLF into another program that adds at least five years to the benefit of loan forgiveness. Please help me assure my members that the government's pledge to those already enrolled in the PSLF program will be fulfilled.

The PSLF program is not "too complicated for borrowers to navigate," also mentioned as a reason to kill the program. It is true that loan servicers sometimes do a less than adequate job, with little supervision. Several of my members have experienced that, and what is needed is better training by the loan servicer.

You can probably understand that the calls for elimination of the program, combined with the potential backtracking of promises made by the Department, make individuals wonder whether the first part of this forgiveness program is going to actually take place in October. What assurances have you received from those in charge of the program, including those responsible for the loan servicer, that they are working to provide as much information as possible to those using the program before October? What systems are in place for the

distribution of funds in October? What will happen to those in the program who expect to have their loans forgiven in the near future?

Many of my members could only afford to take a job in the federal government because of PSLF. I think you would agree that we want people in government who believe in providing service to the American public. Many of these public servants are lawyers or scientists – as I mentioned, people who could make a lot more money in the private sector. They choose to work in government because they are committed to public service, and we as a nation receive a great benefit in turn. However, many would be unable to receive the required education and afford a career in public service without knowing that at some point, they would be able to be out of educational debt. These individuals also need to receive timely information from the loan servicer and/or the Department.

I hope I have convinced you of the value of the PSLF program. The Department must not renege on its earlier promises. I appreciate your attention to this matter and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony M. Reardon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Anthony M. Reardon  
National President