



July 1, 2019

The Honorable Mike Braun
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
United States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Scott
United States Senate
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Braun, Sinema, Coons, and Scott,

On behalf of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), I am writing in support of the Student Loan Tax Elimination Act (S.1696), introduced on June 3, 2019. For over five decades, CGS has served as the national organization dedicated to advancing graduate education and research. Our membership includes nearly 500 institutions of higher education in the United States, Canada, and abroad. Collectively, our members grant 87 percent of all U.S. doctorates and the majority of U.S. master's degrees. CGS is committed to supporting policies that promote access and affordability in higher education.

Occupations requiring at least a master's degree continue to be among the fastest growing segment of the U.S. workforce, including public service-oriented fields such as education and health care.¹ And yet, federal support for graduate education has decreased over the past decade. Graduate students pay multiple origination fees, are no longer eligible for subsidized loans, and have higher interest rates on their federal loans. Origination fees, which work as a hidden tax, increase the overall cost of education. In 2017-2018, the federal government charged students an additional \$1.7 billion in origination fees. This added burden disproportionately impacts graduate students for whom these fees will accrue interest immediately upon disbursement of the loan as well as in repayment. On average, a graduate student in a standard ten-year repayment plan pays about \$1,174 in fees.²

Federal student borrowing policies should promote student achievement by investing in educational excellence and encouraging equal access. By eliminating student loan origination fees, S.1696 takes a commonsense approach to addressing affordability in higher education. CGS commends your efforts and commitment to improving affordability of higher education. If we can be a resource to you or your staff, please contact CGS's Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs, Lauren Inouye, at Linouye@cgs.nche.edu or (202)-461-3864.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Suzanne T. Ortega'.

Suzanne T. Ortega
President

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). Occupational outlook handbook. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.

² National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (November 2017; Updated May 2019). NASFAA Issue Brief. Retrieved from: https://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/Issue_Brief_Origination_Fees.pdf.