



October 10, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
2-230, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
419 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), I would like to commend the passage of H.R. 6, the *Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act*. For more than five decades, CGS has served as the national organization dedicated solely to advancing graduate education and research—our membership includes over 500 institutions of higher education in the United States, Canada, and abroad. Our institutions award the majority of U.S. doctoral and master’s degrees.

The opioid epidemic is devastating families and communities throughout the country, with the rates of addiction, overdose, and death continuing to increase in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Passing the SUPPORT Act demonstrates Congress’s bipartisan commitment to this critical public health crisis. In particular, CGS appreciates the inclusion in the bill of a new student loan repayment program for professionals in the substance use disorder workforce, particularly in high-need areas where these professions are in demand.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, healthcare social workers, mental health and substance abuse social workers, and mental health counselors are among the fastest growing occupations that require a graduate degree at entry-level.<sup>2</sup> To ensure that the workforce can meet the demand for these highly-educated and qualified individuals, recruitment and retention is critical.

Graduate students, and in particular master’s students, rely heavily on federal student loans in order to finance their education. By including this new repayment program, Congress is

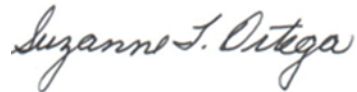
<sup>1</sup> Opioid Overdose Crisis. (March 2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-overdose-crisis#one>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). *Occupational outlook handbook, 2017-18*, Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/occupation-finder.htm?pay=&education=Master%26rsquo%3Bs+degree&training=&newjobs=&growth=&submit=GO>

providing an incentive for individuals to go into these high-demand occupations where salaries may not be as competitive.<sup>3</sup> We also believe that this can serve as another way to help diversify the workforce, which is necessary in serving communities struggling most with the opioid crisis.

CGS applauds Congress's work on this important legislation and your commitment to addressing this vital issue. If CGS 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](mailto:Linouye@cgs.nche.edu) or (202)-461-3864.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne T. Ortega".

Suzanne T. Ortega  
President

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). *Occupational outlook handbook, 2017-18*, Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/occupation-finder.htm?pay=&education=Master%26rsquo%3Bs+degree&training=&newjobs=&growth=&submit=GO>