

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2015

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue Southwest  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

We recognize that ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to complete a postsecondary degree or credential is directly connected to individual and national prosperity and security. However, despite historic increases in federal student aid, college opportunity is at risk for many Americans.

We must reverse the trends of tuition and fees that rise faster than inflation and family income; states that roll back their investment in higher education, shifting costs to students and families; and student debt that has exploded past the \$1 trillion mark. To do this, we must align incentives throughout the system so that there is shared responsibility for reducing costs, improving outcomes, and alleviating the growing burden of student loan debt.

We ask that you, in consultation with Secretary Lew and Director Cordray, provide us with a plan for administrative actions and recommendations for legislative changes needed to achieve the following:

- (1) Enhancing accountability for degree and program quality and cost and aligning incentives by increasing the risk facing institutions of higher education when graduates struggle to repay their student debt;
- (2) Holding institutions of higher education and their leaders financially accountable when they engage in fraud or misconduct that violates federal and state laws;
- (3) Creating incentives and tools that will allow state governments and institutions of higher education to curb tuition inflation and maintain investment in higher education;
- (4) Creating incentives for institutions of higher education to direct more resources to their academic programs and to provide pathways to ensure that all students can complete their degrees and credentials in a timely manner; and
- (5) Guaranteeing that the servicing of federal student loans issued by these institutions of higher education will meet the highest standards of quality, customer service, and compliance with the law to promote borrower success and minimize defaults.

We share the Administration's goal of making the United States first in the world in college attainment. We look forward to working with you to ensure that our investments and incentives are fully aligned with that goal.

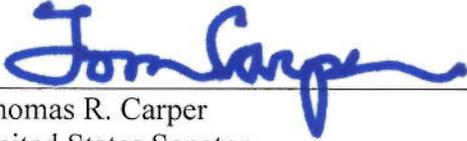
Sincerely,



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



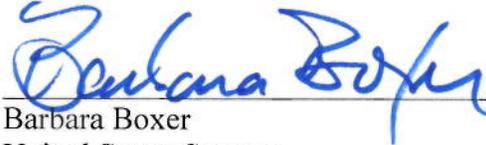
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



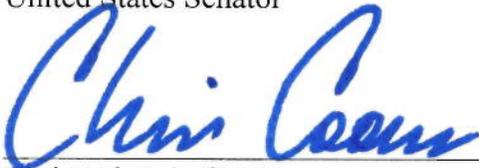
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



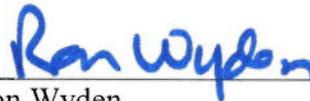
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



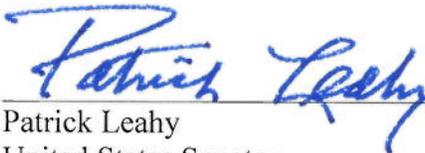
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



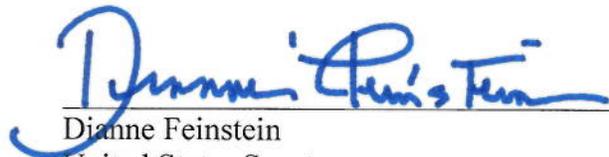
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



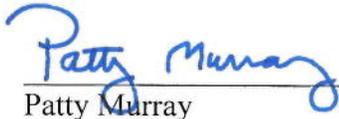
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



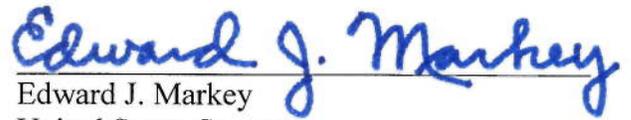
Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



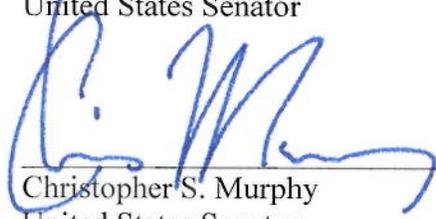
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



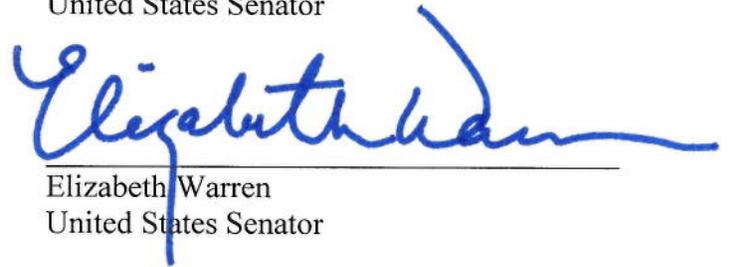
Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



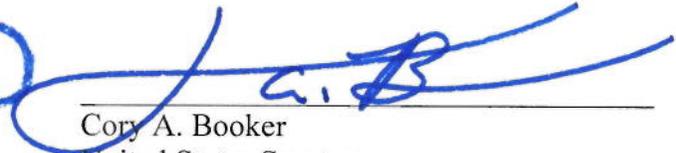
Al Franken  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



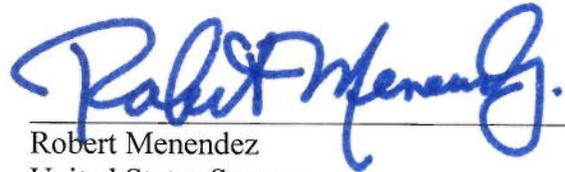
Claire McCaskill  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



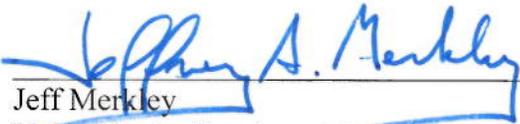
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

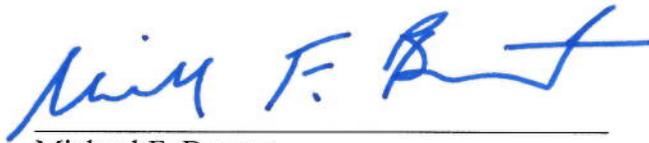


Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senator

  
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Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator

  
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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

  
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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

CC: Jacob J. Lew, Secretary, United States Treasury  
Richard Cordray, Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau