

May 15, 2023

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the National Urban League and UnidosUS (formerly known as the National Council of La Raza), two historic civil rights organizations fighting for economic security for Black and Latino communities and other historically and systemically oppressed populations, we write to share our opposition to the Congressional Review Act resolutions H.J.Res. 45 and S.J.Res. 22, which would overturn President Biden's actions to pause student loan payments and provide student debt relief for low-income and working-class people in America. As the people in our country continue to recover from the deadly COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating economic fallout, it is vital that relief in the form of student debt cancellation be enacted.

Communities of color were hit hardest by both the COVID-19 virus and its associated economic challenges due to systemic barriers. Compared to their white counterparts, people of color are 1.5 times more likely to get the virus* and 2 times more likely to require hospitalization.† Economically, Black and Latino workers are overrepresented in front-line jobs that remained in person during shutdowns and that lacked adequate paid time off to recover from illness and care for sick family members. They continue to be overrepresented in the individuals without access to affordable healthcare and childcare. Following the start of the pandemic, 43% of Black adults experienced a pay cut due to reduced hours or work demand or were laid off either permanently or temporarily.‡ The most impacted group, 1 in 5 Latinas were unemployed at the peak of shutdowns, not counting those who exited the workforce altogether to become caretakers out of necessity.§ Additionally, Black and Latino households were also more likely to have food and housing insecurity, face more adverse health issues related to COVID, and secure more debt in conjunction with already accrued student loan debt due to financial burden.**

Meanwhile, at every level of educational attainment, Black students are more likely to borrow—and borrow at higher levels—than their white counterparts. Black college graduates owe an average of \$52,000 in student loan debt, about \$25,000 more debt than White college graduates.†† Cancellation provides substantial relief to those unable to repay debts because of inequalities in wealth and income

* Hill, Latoya and Samantha Artiga. "COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: Current Data and Changes Over Time." Kaiser Family Foundation, August 22, 2022. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covid-19-cases-and-deaths-by-race-ethnicity-current-data-and-changes-over-time/>

† DeSimone, Daniel. "COVID-19 infections by race: What's behind the health disparities?" Mayo Clinic, October 6, 2022. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/expert-answers/coronavirus-infection-by-race/faq-20488802>

‡ Edwards, Kadijah and Mark Hugo Lopez. "Black Americans say coronavirus has hit hard financially, but impact varies by education level, age." Pew Research Center, May 12, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/12/black-americans-say-coronavirus-has-hit-hard-financially-but-impact-varies-by-education-level-age/>

§ Galdamez, Misael and Gabriella Carmona. "All work and no pay: Unpaid latina care work during the covid-19 pandemic." Latino Policy & Politics Institute, September 8, 2022, <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/latina-care-work-covid19/>

** Monte, Lindsay and Daniel Perez-Lopez. "COVID-19 Pandemic Hit Black Households Harder Than White Households, Even When Pre-Pandemic Socio-Economic Disparities Are Taken Into Account." United States Census Bureau, July 21, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/07/how-pandemic-affected-black-and-white-households.html>

†† Hanson, Melanie. "Student Loan Debt by Race." EducationData.org, January 16, 2023, <https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-by-race>

that particularly impact Black borrowers. 66% of Black borrowers and 37% of Latinos owe more than originally borrowed 12 years after starting college, compared to 30% of white borrowers.*

72% of Latino students take out loans to attend college,[†] and 67% carry educational debt.[‡] In a survey[§] of Latino students who began but did not complete college, UnidosUS and the University of North Carolina's School of Law found that those Latino students who grew up in economically vulnerable communities see college debt as a financial burden that can affect their family's financial security and stability. Interviews with students revealed that the student loan debt burden is causing worry and stress, impacting sleep and quality of life.

The CRA Resolution introduced in March would overturn the pause of federal student loan payments and interest accrual, and President Biden's debt relief plan. This action would abruptly force tens of millions of borrowers into repayment and add thousands of dollars of interest onto their loan balances, causing perilous financial consequences. It would also require the Department of Education to unwind loans forgiven under Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) for nurses, educators, servicemembers, and public service workers across the country. This is a direct attack on millions of workers and families who are still reeling from the devastating impacts of COVID-19, and would most brutally harm communities of color, who not only have the highest amounts of student debt, but are also over indexed in careers in public service.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose the efforts to overturn this relief through the Congressional Review Act (H.J.Res. 45/S.J.Res. 22) and we urge you to consider the damage they would have on the millions of people and families in America who need student loan debt relief. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss, please contact Morgan Polk (mpolk@nul.org) and Roxanne Garza (rgarza@unidosus.org).

Sincerely,

National Urban League
UnidosUS

cc: Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus

* Eaton, et al. Analysis expanding on 2021 white paper "Student Debt Cancellation Is Progressive." May 3, 2022. https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Eaton%20et%20al%20analysis_05.03.22.pdf

† Quintanilla, Denisse. "Latinos with high college loan debt hope for changes, loan forgiveness." NBC News, December 15, 2021. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/latinos-high-college-loan-debt-hope-changes-loan-forgiveness-rcna8702>

‡ Flores, Edwin. "Almost half of Latino student debt is expected to be forgiven under Biden." NBC News, August 24, 2022. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/almost-half-latino-student-loan-debt-expected-forgiven-biden-rcna44652>

§ Sablosky, Kate et al. "Dreams interrupted: A mixed methods study assessing latino college completion." UnidosUS. <https://unidosus.org/publications/dreams-interrupted-a-mixed-methods-study-assessing-latino-college-completion/>