



A Union of Professionals

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American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten
Testimony before the U.S. Department of Education

Good Morning.

My name is Randi Weingarten, and I have the great honor of representing the 1.6 million members of the American Federation of Teachers. The AFT is the nation's largest union of college and university faculty. We have members who work at higher education institutions that are both public and private, not-for-profit and for-profit alike. And many of our members have confronted firsthand the issues of affordability and accessibility of higher education. This is why we offer our members student debt clinics to help them learn how to lower their monthly payments on their federal student debt and eventually access Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

Our members have told us many personal stories in these clinics, so we know a lot about what happens when a student has unaffordable college debt or attends a for-profit college that promises an education it can't (or won't) deliver. For this reason, we oppose any and all attempts by the Department of Education to delay, dismantle or weaken rules that protect students and taxpayers from predatory for-profit colleges. We proudly stand with the 18 states that heard our call to step in where the federal government has stepped away, and who filed suit last week against Betsy DeVos and the U.S. Department of Education over the delay of the borrower defense rule.

What the department should be doing is rigorously enforcing current rules, including moving forward with providing relief to defrauded borrowers and preventing education con artists from fleecing American taxpayers.

Predatory colleges across the country have financially gutted working people—many of them first-generation college students, veterans and people of color—while offering them the false hope of a good job and a fair wage.

Just about the only thing worse than ripping off students with worthless degrees from for-profit colleges is denying them help to relieve their substantial debt, and allowing the schools to continue to prey on students. The most recent borrower defense rule, which this administration wants to delay and rewrite,

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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standardizes the process for eligible students to be relieved of their student loan debt from unscrupulous colleges, and implements important financial accountability standards for the riskiest programs.

The gainful employment regulation will provide students with additional information about outcomes at career education programs, and stop the flow of federal funding to programs that leave students with a mountain of debt and a worthless degree. AFT members teach in programs that are subject to the gainful employment standards, and our members want these regulations enforced. Why? Because we know the difference between the real educations our institutions provide and the dead-end make-work that bad actors in this sector collect our tax dollars to pay for. Repealing the gainful employment regulation will cost us, the American people, \$1.3 billion over 10 years. Why does the Department of Education want to do away with a rule that protects students' and taxpayers' investments in higher education? Let me be blunt: Students should not have to resort to lawsuits to deal with fraud like that committed by Trump University, nor should they suffer when institutions like Corinthian Colleges use bankruptcy to try to avoid their bad deeds.

I have spent quite a bit of time with Secretary DeVos. When we were together in Van Wert, Ohio, this April—seeing the tremendous work public schools can do—she asked me several times whether we could find some common ground. From preschool to graduate school, the students should be our common ground. Their needs and aspirations must trump profit and ideology.

This administration's actions to delay and undermine these rules embolden predatory institutions to continue wreaking havoc on students who want to get decent educations and land good jobs.

The department should protect students and taxpayers by rigorously enforcing the current borrower defense and gainful employment rules; abandon its plans to delay, weaken or otherwise roll back these regulations; and immediately move forward providing relief to defrauded borrowers.

Thank you.