

June 12, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-148, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McCarthy, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Whip Hoyer:

As the Student Body Presidents of Big Ten Universities, we collectively represent over 430,000 students from all backgrounds and areas of study, in eleven different states. It is our mission to ensure that institutions of higher education, both public and private, be accessible to all current and prospective students.

We are writing this letter to urge you to vote against the *Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act* that would be detrimental to prospective and current undergraduate college students across the country. The *PROSPER Act (H.R. 4508)* has good intentions, aiming to reform, simplify, and ultimately reauthorize the *Higher Education Act (HEA)*. However, we believe the bill will hurt many students by making college less affordable and accessible.

One of the key provisions of the *PROSPER Act* eliminates the undergraduate in-school interest subsidy for student loans. If this bill passes, students will pay interest on their student loans throughout their time in college, which would place an unreasonable burden on them. Students should focus on their studies, not the compounding interest on their loans. There is simply no reason that individuals seeking to better their education should be burdened with greater interest on their loans when they have yet to reap many of the benefits of a strong education, including a steady income.

This bill would also hurt the students most in need, as it aims to eliminate Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (FSEOG). These grants of up to \$4,000 annually benefit students whose incomes are among the lowest in the country. While the *PROSPER Act* would expand Pell Grants, the \$300 bonus proposed in the bill would not make up for the loss of up to \$4,000 in SEOG grant funding. At its core, the *HEA* is a promise to students from low and middle income families that federal student aid programs will provide critical support in their pursuit of a postsecondary education. Unfortunately this legislation fails to uphold that fundamental principle.

The *PROSPER Act* would also significantly limit federal TRIO programs, which benefit students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds. This means that programs such as Upward Bound and Talent Search will likely lose funding and support. Low income students and students of color deserve to be supported in their pursuit of higher education, not limited with more barriers. Lastly, the *PROSPER Act* would roll back the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, which gives students interested in public service the opportunity to have their loans forgiven in exchange for service to the country. Changes to PSLF include limiting the program to individuals who have previously made 120 consecutive payments (10 years). Such significant changes to this program would hinder many former and current students' ability to pay off their debts.

We hope that you consider all these issues when deciding how to vote on the *PROSPER Act*. This bill takes money out of student aid, and will result in students losing a collective \$15 billion over the next 10 years. We urge you to vote against this legislation.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Allen
Student Body President
University of Maryland

Aaron Banks
Student Body President
Purdue University

Daniel Greene
Student Body President
University of Michigan

Cody Heaton
Student Body President
The Pennsylvania State University

Walter Lindwall
Student Body President
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Suzanne Link
Student Body President
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Shamina Merchant
Student Body President
The Ohio State University

Simran Mishra
Student Body President
The University of Minnesota - Twin Cities

Hira Mustafa
Student Body President
The University of Iowa

Sky Patterson
Student Body President
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Katherine Rifiotis
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Hunter Traynor
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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Billy Welsh
Student Body President
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Alex Wisniewski
Student Body President
Indiana University