

April 22, 2016

The Honorable Christopher Coons
U.S. Senate
127A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Coons:

The National Council of Higher Education Resources (NCHER) supports passage of S. 2800, the *Stop Taxing Death and Disability Act*, which would eliminate the tax burden on borrowers and their families when a federal or private student loan is discharged due to the death or total and permanent disability of the borrower or, for a Federal PLUS Loan, the student on whose behalf a parent borrowed. This important bill will end the unfair practice where these borrowers are given a tax bill on the amount of the loan that is discharged by the federal government and private lenders, just as if it were regular income.

NCHER has long supported efforts to remove the unfair tax burden on borrowers and their families facing the difficult circumstances of death or total and permanent disability. Whether a grieving parent of a deceased or disabled child, the family of a fallen or severely wounded soldier, or a borrower facing a life-threatening illness, the federal government should not impose an additional financial burden on those borrowers whose student loans are discharged, a benefit they are entitled to under the law. We also want to commend you for the comprehensive approach you are taking to address this problem. Many state, non-profit, and private education lenders offer discharges under terms similar to those offered by the federal government. These borrowers deserve to have all of their education debt treated uniformly under these difficult circumstances.

The timing of the introduction of S. 2800 is important as the U.S. Department of Education recently announced it had identified approximately 387,000 borrowers with federal student loans totaling \$7.7 billion that would likely qualify for loan forgiveness due to total and permanent disability. The Department is planning to notify each potential borrower of the benefits of a loan discharge and, unfortunately, will have to let them know about the tax burden associated with the loan forgiveness. These borrowers have the right to have their student loans discharged and should not be forced to choose between receiving a monthly student loan bill or a tax bill at the end of the year that many will never be able to pay.

NCHER appreciates your work to assist borrowers and their families avoid unfair taxation when student

loans are forgiven due to death or total and permanent disability. Our organization and membership are pleased to endorse this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J P Bergeron', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James P. Bergeron
President

cc: The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Angus King