

September 13th, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington DC, 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

We, the undersigned bipartisan mayors are writing to express our strong opposition to the complete repeal of the 2014 gainful employment regulation (Docket ID ED-2018-OPE-0042).

As local leaders, mayors know that a postsecondary credential beyond high school is a critical tool for success in the 21st century economy. In fact, by the year 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require some kind of postsecondary education and training. Given this reality there is no room for low-quality, high-cost programs that burden our constituents with high-levels of loan debt and give them little means of repaying this debt and contributing to our local economies. That is why we support the 2014 regulations that fulfill the federal government's obligation under law to ensure that career education programs do in fact prepare students for gainful employment.

In accordance with the law, the 2014 gainful employment rule put forth straightforward accountability and transparency requirements that would push struggling and failing programs to improve and would help protect students, families, and taxpayers from programs of poor quality. In 2017, the Department's own data showed that more than 800 programs – 98 percent of them at for-profit institutions – failed to prepare students for gainful employment. Together, with other high-cost, low-quality programs, deemed as "in the zone," 2,000 education programs, serving over half a million students nationwide were threatened with the loss of federal education aid due to their dismal outcomes for students. Many students who end up enrolling in these low-quality programs are low-income, the first in their families to attend college, and are from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education – the exact students who are essential to the continued vibrancy of the communities we represent.

As local leaders, we have a responsibility not only to protect students but also to protect our constituents' hard-earned tax dollars from being wasted on low-quality, high-cost education programs. The Department's own estimates show that rescinding the 2014 regulation will cost taxpayers nationwide \$5.3 billion over ten years.

In short, we need strong accountability at the federal level that weeds out low-quality, high-cost programs that saddle our students with debt, imperil our local economies, and waste taxpayer funds. Retaining the 2014 gainful employment regulations will help ensure that all students – especially the most vulnerable – are protected from predatory institutions and have the ability to make informed choices to prepare them for the careers of their choosing that will drive our national and local economies. We therefore ask that the 2014 gainful employment rule be implemented without further delay and we express our vehement opposition its proposed rescission.