



May 5, 2009

Dear Senator XXXXXX:

As organizations representing vital human services we are asking the Appropriations Committee to include initial funding of \$100 million to the Loan Forgiveness for Services in Areas of National Need. This important program, created as part of the reauthorization of the higher education act (PL 110-315), will begin to provide some much needed support to recruit workers in seventeen areas of human service professions.

As this country faces an economic crisis it is important that we look toward reforms that will strengthen our labor force to address the economic needs of the future. This loan forgiveness program will provide \$2,000 in loan forgiveness a year for up to five years for professionals who continue to work in their respective fields. The areas of national need cover critical human service fields such as early childhood education and child welfare, health and medical specialists including nurses, dentists and mental health professionals and teachers and the school-based professionals in a range of underserved fields.

We know that the first years spent in these areas of national need can be the most challenging. Providing important support and incentives, such as help with paying off student loans, can be a critical complement to a long-term strategy that attempts to reduce initial turnover.

As written by members of congress this new loan forgiveness program has set out important education and professional standards. Congress has also assured that the new law will target areas of critical national need. By structuring this incentive to provide some immediate first year relief while encouraging professionals to continue working for five years, Congress has created an important recruitment tool.

We urge the Administration and Congress to recognize that these professions can become an important building block for creating a twenty-first century workforce. Unlike many of the jobs we are losing, these jobs cannot be shipped overseas; they are growing as the population grows and address a changing demographic.

We hope you will take one of the first steps in building a twenty-first century workforce and fund the Loan Forgiveness for Services in Areas of National Need as part of the FY 2010 budget.

Sincerely,

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)