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Senate Banking Committee Slated to Hold Hearing on Student Loan Borrowers and the Economy Next Week

Today, the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs' Subcommittee on Economic Policy announced that it will hold a hearing titled, "Protecting Student Loan Borrowers and the Economy in Upcoming Transitions," at 3:00 p.m. ET on Tuesday, July 27, 2021. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) serves as Chair and Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA) serves as Ranking Member of the subcommittee. The current witness list consists of: Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers; and The Honorable Letitia James, Attorney General, State of New York. Additional witnesses will be added at a later date. The hearing will be livestreamed [here](#).

Senate HELP Committee Votes on Department of Education Nominees, Burr Opposes Civil Rights Nominee

Today, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee met in executive session to vote on several nominations, including those to the U.S. Department of Education. Of interest to the NCHER members, the committee voted to approve the nomination of Roberto Rodriguez to serve as Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development and the nomination of Elizabeth Brown to serve as General Counsel of the Department by voice vote. "These nominees all made clear at their hearings that they are well-qualified for their roles and will help build back a stronger, fairer country for workers, students, and families across the country," Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) said in a [press release](#). With these votes, the nominations will be advanced directly to the full U.S. Senate for consideration.

The committee did not vote, as expected, on the nomination of Catherine Lhamon to serve as the next Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights at the Department. Last week, Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-NC) and several Republican members stated that they would oppose Ms. Lhamon's nomination. Ranking Member Burr said that Ms. Lhamon's "history is deeply troubling if not outright disqualifying." He expressed concern about "her inflammatory rhetoric on the Title IX rule ensuring due process for students" and pointed to the "pressure OCR [the Office of Civil Rights] put on universities" to find students accused of sexual misconduct guilty during her first tenure in the position during the Obama Administration. He added that Ms. Lhamon "will charge ahead unraveling significant pieces of the previous administration's Title IX rule."

Senate Democrats Call for Increased Investment in Educator Workforce

Sen. Tim Kane (D-VA) and 13 other senators recently wrote a [letter](#) to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) asking for additional investment in a well-prepared, diverse, supported, and stable educator workforce in any upcoming human infrastructure legislation that passes the U.S. Senate. The letter states that its signatories support the pipeline investments outlined in President Joe Biden's American Families Plan. It says: "...the American Families Plan presents an opportunity for Congress to help close equity gaps in student access to a well-prepared, diverse, supported, and stable educator workforce. As such, we urge Congress to provide \$9 billion over ten years to close these opportunity gaps." The letter requests that Senate leaders support the following:

- Invest \$2.8 billion in comprehensive preparation programs through the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program.
- Provide \$400 million to the Augustus F. Hawkins Center of Excellence.
- Allocate \$900 million to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, Part D, Personnel Preparation Program.

The letter is also signed by Sens. Ben Ray Luján (D-NM), Angus King (I-ME), Tina Smith (D-MN), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA).

Missouri Governor Signs Bill Removing Public College Tuition Cap

Last week, Missouri Governor Mike Parson signed into law [legislation](#) that will remove the cap on tuition and allow the state's public colleges and universities to set their own tuition rates starting in July 2022. Under the previous law, Missouri public colleges and universities could only raise tuition on certain students to keep up with inflation or compensate for state funding cuts. After July 2022, institutions of higher education that charge different tuition rates for certain programs will be required to discontinue mandatory fees for courses as boosting course fees had been a method an institution could use to take in more revenue but still comply with the tuition cap. The new law includes other measures that affect higher education in the state, including giving college athletes the ability to profit off of their image or likeness. Missouri is not the only state that has put tuition freeze provisions in place. Eleven states have adopted rules to cap or suspend tuition growth among four-year colleges, and 10 states have done so for two-year schools. For more coverage, see this article from [Higher ED Dive](#).

U.S. Department of Education News

For today's *Federal Register*, click [here](#).

General News

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that Granite State Management and Resources became the second federal student loan servicer in less than two weeks to announce that it will not be extending its contract with the U.S. Department of Education when it expires on

December 31, 2021.

[Forbes](#) continues its coverage of whether President Joe Biden will extend the federal student loan forbearance period that expires on September 30th.

[Yahoo](#) reports on how borrowers can afford to buy a house even with student loan debt.

[Forbes](#) reports that student loan debt tops families' college concerns as high tuition costs continue.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that Congressional-directed spending or earmarks are back. Seven of the appropriations bills approved by the House Appropriations Committee include funding that would go directly to colleges and universities through the earmark process.

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) reports on six things to know about the new Title IX guidance released by the U.S. Department of Education for how colleges and universities should investigate sexual misconduct under Title IX, the federal gender-equity law.

[Higher Ed Dive](#) reports that the Council of Independent Colleges, which represents more than 750 private nonprofit schools and higher education organizations, announced earlier this month it is launching a consortium of Ohio institutions aiming to improve transfer pathways into the liberal arts.

[The Guardian](#) reports that South Carolina State University, the state's only public Historically Black College or University, recently announced that the school was automatically clearing the loan accounts of over 2,500 students who have not registered for classes or who dropped out entirely because they could no longer afford college.

[MASS Live](#) reports that Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) is looking for more than incremental change. She wants generational change. The senator is pushing the Biden Administration to implement a multi-part response to lowering the student debt burden on the nation's young adults and seeks free options for future generations.

[Patch](#) reports that Connecticut State Colleges and Universities has announced that \$17 million in student loan debt accumulated by community college students during the COVID-19 pandemic will be forgiven. The forgiveness, which will be funded by Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund money provided by Congress, affects all account

balances that resulted from enrollment in summer 2019 through spring 2021 semesters. All registration holds related to these outstanding balances have also been removed.

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