

May 6, 2022

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C., 20500

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of the 7,000 librarians and contingent teaching faculty of UC-AFT (University Council-American Federation of Teachers Local 1474), who work at all University of California campuses, I write to urge you to end the student debt crisis universally and without means testing.

Millions of American workers and their families, young and old, are desperate for a sign that the federal government is on our side. As you well know, the nearly \$2 trillion in student debt owed by millions of Americans is undermining our future. Higher education, from two-year community colleges to massive research institutions, is meant to serve the public good through teaching, research, and service. But student debt is distorting our public mission, whether as hands-on educators or as land-grant, sea-grant, space-grant institutions with explicitly public-serving missions.

Debt forces students into lifetimes of onerous repayment. Many millions of Americans never truly see the financial upside of higher education. They are stuck paying down sums far in excess of initial loans. This crisis affects people of all backgrounds in every state who attend every kind of institution. It also disproportionately hurts borrowers of color and women borrowers.

I call on you to use your power to take action that moves all of us forward. Workers and their families cannot afford to remain saddled with these unsustainable debt burdens.

Specifically, I am asking you to cancel all federal student debt using executive action. Furthermore, I call on you to enact a universal cancellation program, with no means testing or opt-in requirements. This is a time for clear, bold action that reminds Americans and the labor movement what it means for the federal government to take action that directly improves our lives and secures our futures.

As labor leaders, education workers, debtors, and students ourselves, we look forward to working with you to end the student debt crisis and to develop new funding mechanisms that support higher education as the public good it needs to be, while ensuring that current and future students can avoid the trap of student debt.

Thank you for your attention to these urgent matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mia L. McIver". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Mia L. McIver, Ph.D.
Lecturer, UCLA
President, UC-AFT