



Durbin, Duckworth Call On President Biden To Extend Pause On Student Loan Payments

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and U.S. Representatives Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-7), and Joe Courtney (D-CT-2), to send a bicameral letter to President Biden calling on him to extend the pause on federal student loan payments until at least March 31, 2022.

“The scheduled resumption of student loan payments in October could create a significant drag on our economic recovery. Before the pandemic, the average student loan payment was between [\\$200 and \\$299 per month](#) – a substantial part of a household budget, and money that is desperately needed for basic needs,”the lawmakers wrote.

Extending the pause on payments would provide ongoing relief for student loan borrowers, who are disproportionately women and people of color, the same groups that have been more adversely affected by the pandemic. It would also give the Education Department (ED) more time to prepare for payments to resume.

“We urge you to act quickly to extend the current pause on payments and interest so that borrowers are not penalized and student debt payments do not drag down the pace of our economic recovery. Specifically, we ask that you extend the pause by at least six months—until March 31, 2022—or until the economy reaches pre-pandemic employment levels, whichever is longer,”the lawmakers concluded.

During the coronavirus pandemic, executive actions and the passage of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act* paused payments for millions of borrowers. Recognizing the significant burden that student debt places on borrowers during an economic crisis, President Biden extended this pause through September 30, 2021, for the 87 percent of borrowers with direct federal loans. During this pause, ED has provided approximately [\\$72 billion](#) in relief on student loan interest alone - money that has been reinvested into the economy. Borrowers have reported being able to pay down other debt, relieve financial pressures from lost jobs or decreased earnings, and support their families.

However, student loan payments are currently scheduled to resume on October 1, 2021. This could create an unnecessary drag on the economic recovery, especially with unemployment benefits also set to expire in September. Following past emergency suspensions of student loans during natural disasters, increased numbers of borrowers became delinquent or defaulted on their loans.

The letter is also signed by U.S. Senators Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Tina Smith (D-MN), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Jack Reed (D-RI), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and Krysten Sinema (D-AZ).

In April 2021, Durbin and Duckworth [joined](#) a group of colleagues in a letter to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona urging the Department of Education to take swift action to automatically remove all federally-held student loan borrowers from default.

In February 2021, Durbin and Duckworth [called on](#) President Biden to use his existing authority to cancel \$50,000 in student debt.

In March 2020, Durbin and Duckworth [worked](#) with their Senate colleagues to unveil an emergency student loan payment and relief plan that aimed to immediately cancel monthly student loan payments for the duration of the COVID-19 national emergency and pay down a minimum of \$10,000 for all federal student loan borrowers.

Full text of the letter is [here](#).