



January 17, 2024

Dr. Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

via electronic delivery

Dear Secretary Cardona:

We write to express our concerns regarding the difficulties students and families are facing with the newly rebuilt Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The college application and financial aid process is perhaps one of the most stressful periods for young people and their parents. It was troubling to learn that delays and mistakes with the rollout of the new FAFSA form are forcing college hopefuls to wait longer than normal for their financial aid offers.

Students and families were forced to delay their financial aid applications because the new FAFSA form was not ready until December 30, 2023. This is three months later than the previous October 1 application opening date. While it is good news that over 1 million forms have been successfully submitted through the redesigned system and that it is now available 24/7¹, it is incredibly frustrating that this process started significantly later than normal.

Perhaps most concerning for families and their budgets, is the fact that the new form has not been adjusted for inflation. The FAFSA Simplification Act was a bipartisan effort to simplify the college financial aid application process and update the formula for determining eligibility to include, among other factors, inflation. Because the Department has not made this adjustment as required by law, students and families will now receive less financial aid than they are eligible for.

Americans are paying higher prices every day for gas, groceries, energy bills, and other necessities. A recent study showed that an average household spent over \$11,400 more in 2023 just to enjoy their same standard of living from January 2021. In our home state of Minnesota, that figure is even higher as our families are paying nearly \$13,000 more to cope with the skyrocketing cost of living.² Family budgets need financial aid now, perhaps more than ever, to help their students pay for college amidst this economic uncertainty.

We ask the Department of Education to act quickly to fix the error with the inflation adjustment so that students and families can have the certainty they need ahead of enrollment deadlines for the 2024-2025 school year. Family budgets cannot afford the uncertainty that comes with delaying action until the 2025-2026 financial aid cycle. Preparing for college should be an exciting time for all American students and their families. We need to alleviate as much of the financial burden as possible so families can focus more on the new opportunities that await students at university.

¹ U.S. Department of Education press release 1/8/24.

<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-over-1-million-2024-2025-fafsa-forms-successfully-submitted-and-form-now-available-24-7-students-and-families>

² “Americans need an extra \$11,400 today just to afford the basics, Republican analysis finds”

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/inflation-households-need-extra-11400-these-states-its-even-higher/>

Sincerely,



Representative Kristin Robbins



Representative Pam Altendorf



Representative Ben Bakeberg



Representative Brian Daniels



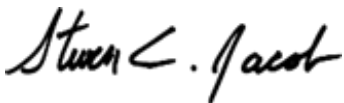
Representative Marj Fogelman



Representative Bobbie Harder



Representative Walter Hudson



Representative Steven Jacob



Representative Patricia Mueller



Minority Leader Lisa Demuth



Representative Jeff Backer



Representative Peggy Bennett



Representative Jeff Dotseth



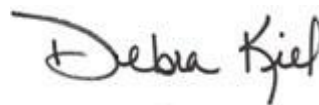
Representative Mary Franson



Representative Josh Heintzeman



Representative Spencer Igo



Representative Deb Kiel



Representative Nathan Nelson



Representative Bernie Perryman



Representative Isaac Schultz



Representative Marion Rarick



Representative Roger Skraba

cc:

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Congresswoman Angie Craig
Congressman Dean Phillips
Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Congresswoman Ilhan Omar
Congressman Tom Emmer
Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach
Congressman Pete Stauber
Senator Tina Smith
Senator Amy Klobuchar