

Department of Childhood Studies Faculty Statement in Support of Graduate Students

December, 2017

We, the faculty of the Department of Childhood Studies, Rutgers University—Camden, NJ, stand with our graduate students in opposition to the proposed provisions in current tax reform bills under consideration by the US Congress. These efforts by US law makers would, if made into law, devastate the foundations of higher education by imposing a tax on tuition waivers, something which could very well make graduate education unaffordable for scores of students causing many to leave programs in the midst of their studies.

In addition, important features of the legislation would undermine already sparse resources for children's health by defunding the CHIP program and stripping the individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act, as well as destabilizing the economic viability of many families. As instructors and researchers in a program that has been built upon and dedicated to the well-being of children, we consider it deplorable that lawmakers would abandon any semblance of the recognition of the lives and experiences of young people and their caretakers.

In unequivocal terms, we reject the presumption and justification of this legislation that frames graduate students as undeserving recipients of university and governmental largesse who do nothing for their financial support. To the contrary, we recognize and celebrate the significant contributions that graduate students make to our program and campus. As research assistants, teaching assistants, instructors and active members of the departmental, college and campus community, graduate students produce significant value of all kinds and on many levels with creativity and enthusiasm. We find it particularly wrong-headed, shortsighted and insidious that any policy maker would cast aspersions on the efforts of those whose dedication and contributions far outpace the financial compensation graduate students receive.

We echo the invitation Childhood Studies graduate students make to all graduate students, programs and faculty across the Camden campus and Rutgers system, and beyond, to join together in finding avenues to develop creative responses to this situation if these provisions become law. With them, we call on Rutgers University administrators at the campus and university levels to coordinate with students and faculty on developing a written plan for how to mitigate the serious financial impact this tax plan would have on graduate students' lives. Such a plan could include a rethinking of how to offer tuition relief

in a way that does not subject it to taxation as well as proposing detailed ways in which the University can materially support graduate students who experience a significant drop in resources. In addition, it is important that all involved address the specific circumstances of international students who will be affected especially hard due to visa constraints which limit their ability to secure income outside of their employment with the university.

Our work, livelihoods, vocations and the viability of our program, campus and university hang in the balance with this legislation and with our responses to it. In voicing our support of our graduate students, we indicate that their struggles are not theirs alone.

Signed,

The faculty of the Department of Childhood Studies, Rutgers University—Camden, NJ, USA