



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RESOLUTION NO. 210820

Introduced October 7, 2021

Councilmember Oh

RESOLUTION

Calling on the U.S. Department of Education to resolve bureaucratic errors within the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program which have led to the exclusion of qualified veterans and other public servants.

WHEREAS, The federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program was created in 2007 to encourage the country's best and brightest to fill critical positions in the public sector; and

WHEREAS, Under the program, those employed in select public service positions – such as teachers and those serving in the armed forces – would be eligible for debt cancellation after a decade of payments; and

WHEREAS, Since its adoption, however, it is reported that 98 percent of applicants have been deemed ineligible by the U.S. Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, Those that serve our Nation in public service positions – particularly those that risk their safety serving in the armed forces – should not be required to jump through bureaucratic hoops and red tape to receive their entitled benefits; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), of the nearly 180,000 active-duty service-members with federal student loans, only 124 individuals have qualified for relief under the PSLF program; and

WHEREAS, In a recent *60 Minutes* report, veterans shared their personal experiences navigating the PSLF program; and

WHEREAS, Army JAG Major Heather Tregle, chief of complex litigation for the Army's prosecutors, was told that her six months of active duty service in Afghanistan was not being counted toward her period of service, and that some of her payments were deemed ineligible due to an auto-payment error that left her cents short of the qualified monthly payment; and

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WHEREAS, In another case, Army JAG Lt. Colonel Jonathan Hirsch made on-time payments for a decade before receiving a letter stating none of his loan payments qualified for forgiveness under the PSLF program; and

WHEREAS, There is an appeal process, but it can often take years, and borrowers are expected to continue making payments while their cases are reviewed; and

WHEREAS, The Public Service Loan Forgiveness program rightfully identified the need to encourage public service among our most talented and qualified citizens, but has failed to uphold its obligation to millions of borrowers; and

WHEREAS, Public servants – and particularly veterans and those serving active duty in our armed forces – should not be faced with undue and burdensome obstacles in receiving benefits to which they are entitled to; and

WHEREAS, The Biden administration has announced a formal regulatory review of the program that will begin this month; and

WHEREAS, Acts should be taken via executive authority to immediately resolve these ongoing complications and deliver critical relief to our Nation’s public servants; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on the U.S. Department of Education to resolve bureaucratic errors within the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program which have led to the exclusion of qualified veterans and other public servants.