

MICHAEL V. LAWLER
17TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

HOUSE FINANCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE

HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

lawler.house.gov



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3217

WASHINGTON DC OFFICE:
324 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3217
(202) 225-6506

DISTRICT OFFICE:
ONE BLUE HILL PLAZA
THIRD FLOOR, P.O. BOX 1645
PEARL RIVER, NY 10965
(845) 201-2060

CARMEL TOWN HALL
60 MCALPIN AVENUE
MAHOPAC, NY 10541
(845) 743-7130

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202

November 24, 2026

Dear Secretary McMahon,

I write today to encourage the Department of Education to maintain a wider definition of “professional degree” as you implement the Working Families Tax Cut legislation. As our country continues to navigate workforce shortages, particularly in the healthcare sector, it is important to recognize professional degrees as they are, in keeping with the intent of the law.

The Working Families Tax Cut legislation modified the annual loan limit caps for students in graduate programs. The law caps traditional graduate education at \$20,500 per year and \$100,000 overall. But for graduate students seeking professional degrees, this limit is raised to \$50,000 per year and \$200,000 overall. The law refers to existing regulation to define “professional degree,” as a degree that “signifies both completion of the academic requirements for beginning practice in a given profession and a level of professional skill beyond that normally required for a bachelor's degree. Professional licensure is also generally required.” The regulation lays out a non-exhaustive list of ten professional degrees.

While the Department of Education certainly has the capacity to expand the definition in upcoming rulemaking, there is concern that this list of ten degrees will be made exhaustive. As you make these considerations, I urge you to add to the list of professional degrees to include programs such as nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and more. These programs clearly meet the existing definition in regulation.

At a time when our country is experiencing workforce shortages across healthcare sectors, we should be encouraging students to go into these fields, not preventing them from doing so. By including these professional health programs in upcoming rulemaking, we can expand access to student loans for individuals looking to go into these essential fields and help fill the gaps already impacting our healthcare system.

Thank you for the consideration, and I look forward to hearing back.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael V. Lawler".

Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress