Official Written Testimony in Support of Fiscal Year 2027 Department of Education Appropriations and Language; and Department of Labor Appropriations and Language

Submitted to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations

United States House of Representatives

April 16, 2026

Submitted by

The Advanced Professional Workforce Alliance

On behalf of the Advanced Professional Workforce Alliance (APWA), I am pleased to provide this written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies for the official record. **APWA urges Congress to direct the Department of Education and the Department of Labor to produce reports of the impacts of the student loan limits specifically on programs and professions not designated "professional" implemented through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act on institutional programs as well as workforce impacts.**

APWA requests that the Committee directs the Department of Education to include in the fiscal year 2028 and future Congressional Justifications updates on how the implementation of the regulation is impacting programs and professions not designated "professional." This should include changes in enrollment, completion, and input from institutions of higher education and professional associations on degrees not currently considered "professional." The Secretary and Department shall include recommendations on creating a process to reaffirm and retain the Secretary's authority to designate programs as professional where the nature of the training, regulatory structure, and workforce function warrant such treatment.

APWA requests that the Committee also directs the Department of Labor to include in the fiscal year 2028 and future Congressional Justifications updates on how the implementation of the regulation is impacting the workforce for professions not designated "professional." This should include components such as amount of students entering advanced roles, employment rates in areas of high need, workforce shortages within these fields, and data on low-income or first-generation students entering these fields to highlight any disproportionate effects from loan limits on these students.



The Department of Education's Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) regulation proposes to redefine "professional degrees." The regulation proposes a narrow definition of "professional degrees" that excludes numerous graduate programs essential to public health, behavioral health, education, infrastructure, and public safety. These exclusions risk increasing financial barriers for students, reducing program enrollment, and exacerbating critical workforce shortages across the nation.

The proposed reports would require the two Departments to track the regulatory impact, solicit input from affected institutions and professional associations, and recommend a process to preserve the Department of Education's Secretary's authority to designate qualifying programs as professional. This request carries no additional appropriations cost and leverages existing departmental reporting mechanisms. Fields such as architecture, social work, public health, occupational therapy, physical therapy, athletic training, mental health counseling, health administration, naturopathic medicine, nutrition and dietetics, and others require graduate education, can include mandatory clinical training hours, and often require state licensure for practice. Their exclusion from the professional degree designation directly affects student access to financial aid and creates downstream workforce consequences.

The affected programs collectively prepare tens of thousands of professionals annually for practice in fields experiencing acute workforce shortages. Programs excluded from the professional degree classification face more restrictive borrowing limits and may lose access to certain federal financial aid provisions. Reclassification will disproportionately affect students from lower-income backgrounds and underrepresented populations, undermining professional fields that serve the public. Institutions of higher education have structured program offerings, enrollment management strategies, and financial aid counseling around longstanding interpretations of the professional degree framework. Sudden changes will require costly system updates, revisions to student advisement practices, and potential restructuring of programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to recommend the Department of Education and the Department of Labor's reports on the impact of the professional degree designation.

Advanced Professional Workforce Alliance

Steering Committee: American Institute of Architects; Association of University Programs in Health Administration; American Occupational Therapy Association; American Physical Therapy Association; National Board for Certified Counselors; National Athletic Trainers' Association; Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health; American Association of



Naturopathic Physicians; Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges; Association for Athletic Training Education

Voting Members actively shape coalition advocacy while maintaining full participation in all coalition activities. Members have voting rights on coalition sign-on letters, comments, and advocacy positions.

Voting Members: American Council of Academic Physical Therapy; American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges; The American Health Care Association and the National Center for Assisted Living; Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions; Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine; American Association of Nurse Practitioners; Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine; American Academy of Physician Associates

Non-Voting Members: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education; Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture; National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy; National Society of Genetic Counselors; PA Education Association; Genetic Counselor Educators Association; ADVION; National Association of Social Workers; American Geriatrics Society; American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy; American Music Therapy Association