

## Provide Student Loan Relief to Medical Residents on the Frontlines

Many residents and medical students have played or are playing a critical role in responding to the COVID-19 crisis by providing care to patients. A recent study reported that residents in the field of anesthesiology are at particularly high risk of infection due to the proximity to patients.

Anesthesiologist involvement in the intubation of patients, whether for surgeries or for ICU patients who need ventilators, brings very high risk of exposure to infection and subsequent severe illness. Intubation causes the production of tiny liquid airborne droplets that contain the highly infectious virus. These aerosolized particles can be inhaled if a physician is within 6 feet of an infectious source. Anesthesiologists who are intubating patients are in very close proximity- often inches - from their patient's mouth.

For residents, COVID-19 is inflicting additional strain as they are redeployed from their primary training programs and put their health at risk by caring for the sickest patients. Some medical schools, such as New York University have even graduated their students early to deploy them to care for patients during this public health crisis. For these residents and early graduated medical students, debt can average well over \$200,000.

While there are several promising proposals pending in Congress that address student debt, ASA and the broader medical community have been working together to promote policies that address the work undertaken by physicians and residents that treat COVID-19 patients. **ASA and the broader medical community urge Congress to provide student loan relief for residents and medical students that recognizes their role in providing care to patients.**

### *Advance Policies Supported by the Medical Community*

**ASA and the broader medical community have supported:**

- Providing at least \$20,000 of federal student loan forgiveness or \$20,000 of tuition relief.
- These benefits should also be made available to third- and fourth-year medical students who were or are willing, and deemed competent, to begin providing early direct patient care for patients with COVID-19, or who were or are making other significant contributions to the pandemic response through research, public health, and telemedicine.

### *The Resident Education Deferred Interest Act (“REDI Act”)*

While the cost of graduate-level medical education is substantial for physicians in training, residents can qualify to have their student payments halted during residency through deferment or forbearance processes. However, the loans continue to accrue interest that accumulates to the overall loan balance.

H.R. 1554, the “Resident Education Deferred Interest Act” (REDI Act), would allow borrowers to qualify for **interest-free deferment** on their student loans while serving in a medical or dental internship or residency program.



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### *Expanded Student Loan Relief Provisions of the HEROES Act*

The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, H.R. 6800, was passed by the House of Representatives on May 15, 2020. The HEROES Act is a massive relief and stimulus package and among its provisions are measures to provide student loan relief to **economically distressed borrowers**. The bill, if enacted into law, supports borrowers through:

- \$10,000 in federal student loan forgiveness
- \$10,000 in private student loan forgiveness
- Continued and extended suspension of payments, interest, and collections on government-held federal student loans through September 2021 (CARES Act, passed March 27, 2020, included these protections only through September 30, 2020)
- Expansion of CARES Act protections (suspension of payments, interest and collections) to include commercially-held FFEL-program federal student loans, as well as Perkins loans
- A fix to Public Service Loan Forgiveness that would allow payments made on previously consolidated federal student loans to potentially count towards the 120 qualifying monthly payments required for the program

### REQUEST:

Congress should provide debt relief to residents and medical students who provide care during the COVID-19 public health emergency.