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May 4, 2016

The Honorable John B. King, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary King,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we write in support of the Department of Education's response to the Association for Private Sector Colleges and Universities' April 14 request that the Department delay sanctions under the gainful employment rule. We agree with the Department that "students and taxpayers deserve not to wait any longer for these commonsense protections." In order to protect students from predatory practices at for-profit institutions, the Department must fully implement the gainful employment rule.

Far too often, students from vulnerable populations have enrolled at for-profit institutions after being sold on the promise of receiving an excellent education and an opportunity for a better life, only to end up saddled with enormous student loan debt and limited job prospects. The performance of these schools in terms of student outcomes and cost is a concern for the civil rights community, particularly due to the overrepresentation of African-American and Latino students at these institutions.

The civil rights community has become increasingly concerned about the rise of the for-profit educational industry. Research suggests that for-profit institutions are undermining rather than enhancing economic opportunities for African-American and Latino students. These students attending for-profit institutions have comparatively worse performance outcomes than those at public and private non-profit institutions. Data show that students at four year for-profit institutions are less likely to graduate and more likely to default on their student loans. At the same time, students attending for-profit institutions borrow a significantly more money to cover college costs.

Students of color who enter programs of study with virtually-guaranteed poor outcomes are left with crippling debt, few prospects for repayment, and compromised future opportunities. We urge the Department to meaningfully enforce the gainful employment rule in a way that will hold predatory colleges responsible for their fraudulent and abusive tactics. Moving forward, we would appreciate the opportunity to work alongside the Department to ensure educational equity for all students through enforcement of the gainful employment rule. If you have any questions, please contact Josh Porter, Policy Analyst, at porter@civilrights.org or Nancy Zirkin, Executive Vice President, at zirkin@civilrights.org.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wade Henderson", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Zirkin", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President