



June 10, 2016

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

On behalf of the more than 2 million members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), including more than 90,000 higher education workers of which 40,000 are academic workers, thank you for introducing S.3025, the Graduate Student Savings Act of 2016.

The Graduate Student Savings Act of 2016 could improve the retirement prospects of nearly 100,000 postdoctoral fellows and hundreds of thousand graduate employees. Many postdoctoral and graduate employees, such as Joel Lewis Postdoctoral Fellow, School of Mathematics, University of Minnesota, and Collen McClean, MD/PhD Candidate at Duke University, forego compensation in order to train and conduct important research that brings in billions of dollars in grants to colleges and universities. They deserve to be able to save for the future.

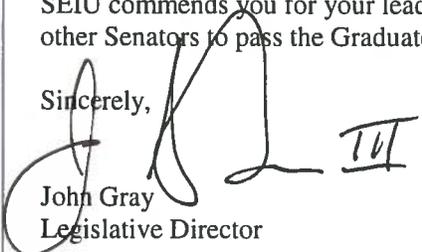
"I was very excited to get an NSF fellowship: it meant some guaranteed job stability and a raise, part of which I was hoping to put towards retirement savings. So it was a big disappointment to discover that my wife (who is also a Fellow) and I can't make IRA contributions because our income is in the form of fellowship. As a result, we'll miss several years of contributions, which will cost us thousands of dollars in the long run. It will be a major improvement to our retirement plans and financial security if we are able to make IRA contributions from our stipends." – Dr. Joel Lewis

"Most physician-scientist trainees don't finish their graduate degrees until their early thirties, after which there are 4 to more than 10 years of additional fellowship or postdoctoral training before finally getting a "real job" and a compensatory paycheck. Myself and many of my colleagues are therefore facing the prospect of delaying tax-deductible retirement saving well into mid-life. Making the choice to dedicate one's life to research, and take the associated reduced pay, is hard enough without tax disincentives making the process even more difficult." – Colleen McClean

S.3025, combined with the Obama Administration's new overtime rules, will help to put countless over worked and underpaid academic workers on the path to retiring with dignity.

SEIU commends you for your leadership, and we look forward to working with you and other Senators to pass the Graduate Student Savings Act of 2016 in the near future.

Sincerely,



John Gray
Legislative Director

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