

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
<https://oversight.house.gov>

September 15, 2022

Mr. Stuart Delery
Counsel to the President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Delery:

We are investigating whether Biden Administration officials who worked on the student loan bailout will personally benefit from this financial windfall. It is unethical for public officials to craft policies from which they stand to benefit financially.¹ Despite reports that White House political appointees collectively owe millions in student loan debt, the Office of Government Ethics informed Committee Republicans that no White House official sought an ethics waiver to work on student loan bailout proposals.² We write to request documents and information to determine whether Biden Administration officials have a conflict of interest in advocating for and enacting this massive government handout in which they or their family members would receive a financial benefit at the expense of American taxpayers.

President Biden's student loan bailout is a wealth transfer from hardworking Americans to highly educated, upper-middle-class graduates. This bailout will cost the average taxpayer over \$2,000.³ Many hardworking taxpayers do not hold a college degree or made difficult financial decisions to finance their degree either without borrowing from taxpayers or by paying off their student loans as promised. We are concerned that political officials may have committed serious ethics violations if they provided advice and counsel or drafted the bailout scheme from which they financially benefited.

The White House's announcement that it will cancel up to \$10,000 in student loans (\$20,000 for those who received a Pell Grant previously) for any individual with an income up to \$125,000, or a household income of up to \$250,000, does not exempt political appointees with

¹ See Exec. Order No. 13989 "Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel," (Jan. 20, 2021).

² See Letter from Emory Rounds, III, Director, Office of Government Ethics to James Comer, Ranking Member, Comm. On Oversight & Reform (Jun. 29, 2022), *on file with committee staff*.

³ Lautz, Andrew, *Cost of Student Debt Cancellation Could Average \$2,000 Per Taxpayer*, NATIONAL TAXPAYERS UNION FOUNDATION (Aug. 23, 2022).

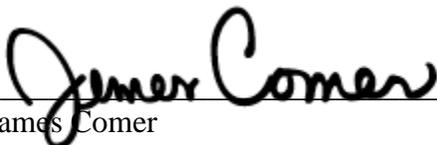
outstanding student loans.⁴ This omission raises concerns that political appointees with student loans will financially benefit from a policy they crafted. These are not merely hypothetical concerns. Reports indicate that thirty senior White House staffers have millions in outstanding student loans.⁵ Collectively, those staffers owe approximately \$4.7 million, an amount which does not include loans of mid-level staffers who are not required to publicly disclose their debts due to junior status or pay thresholds.⁶

To assist Committee Republicans in conducting oversight over the Biden Administration's announced student loan bailout, especially where the policy may have been created by political appointees with a financial conflict of interest, please provide the following information no later than September 29, 2022 covering the time period January 20, 2021 to the present:

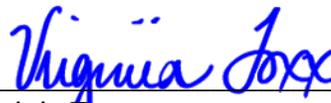
1. A list of all employees in the Biden Administration who have worked on the Administration's student loan forgiveness policy;
2. All documents and communications indicating whether those employees have outstanding student loans that would be forgiven in whole or in part under the policy;
3. A copy of any ethics waivers sought or granted to those employees to work on the student loan forgiveness policy;
4. A signed copy of all ethics pledges pertaining to any individual identified above.

To ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor

⁴ Fact Sheet: *President Biden Announces Student Loan Relief for Borrowers Who Need It Most*, THE WHITE HOUSE (Aug. 24, 2022), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/24/fact-sheet-president-biden-announces-student-loan-relief-for-borrowers-who-need-it-most/>.

⁵ Josh Wingrove, *Biden's Student Loan Plan is Personal for 30 Top Aides with Millions in Debt*, BLOOMBERG (May 19, 2022).

⁶ *Id.*

Mr. Stuart Delery
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cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Robert C. Scott, Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor