

Higgins welcomes historic action to address student debt

Says changes coming to provide relief, make college tuition repayment affordable

Congressman Brian Higgins, D-NY-26, welcomed actions announced by President Joe Biden to cut student debt and lessen the financial burden on Americans pursuing higher education.

Higgins said, "The cost of a college education has risen exponentially in recent years, making it beyond reach for many hard-working families and creating a lifelong financial burden for others. A degree should be accessible to all who wish to pursue a higher education route. By lifting the weight of education debt, people are better positioned to own a home, raise a family, serve their communities, and contribute to a

socially and economically successful society."

Biden announced up to \$20,000 in debt relief for Pell-grant eligible students, and up to \$10,000 in relief for other eligible borrowers. Families/couples with a household income under \$250,000/annually and individuals earning less than \$125,000 may qualify. The U.S. Department of Education will be releasing additional details on how to claim the relief, noting that some may qualify automatically. The American Rescue Plan, supported by Higgins, makes changes that allow certain student loan relief to be excluded from gross income.

According to CollegeBoard, "In 2019-20, 55% of bachelor's degree recipients from public and private nonprofit four-year colleges and universities graduated with debt and had an average debt level of \$28,400."

Higgins said the administration will also extend the pause of student loan repayment, interest, and collections, which began during the pandemic, through Dec. 31, 2022, noting borrowers should plan to resume payments in 2023.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education plans to create an income-driven repayment plan that caps monthly payments for those with an undergraduate degree at

5% of a borrower's discretionary income, cutting existing payments in half for many. Details of which will follow the federal rule-making process.

In 2007, Congress created the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program to provide those who work for a minimum of 10 years in public service, including teachers, police, government and not-for profit organization workers, with some student debt relief. Temporary changes to the program, made by the Biden administration, make it easier for workers to apply and qualify.

Higgins' office has already assisted several Western New York-

ers with the PSLF process and encourages more Western New Yorkers to apply before the Oct. 31 deadline.

In this week's announcement, Biden indicated plans to build on these temporary changes to continue to make the PSLF program accessible.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, nearly 2.58 million New Yorkers carried a total of over \$49.5 billion in student loan debt at the end of 2021, with New York borrowers having on average over \$38,000 in outstanding student loans.

IN THE NEWS

Wegmans pharmacies now offering vaccine for flu season

SUBMITTED BY WEGMANS

The most important step to protecting yourself during the upcoming 2022-23 flu season is getting the influenza vaccine, which is now available at all Wegmans pharmacy locations. Getting your family ready for flu season is easy – just stop by your Wegmans pharmacy during normal business hours, or schedule an appointment online. There is no need for a prescription, and in most cases, the fee is covered in full by insurance.

The flu shot has been proven to reduce flu-related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. The CDC recommends everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu shot and take preventive actions like staying away from people who are sick and frequent handwashing to help slow the spread of germs.

All Wegmans pharmacy locations now offer flu vaccines for children, adults and seniors. Minimum age requirements for the pediatric flu immunization vary by state; contact your local Wegmans pharmacy to learn more.

The Wegmans pharmacy busi-

ness partnership program offers onsite flu clinics for employers interested in giving employees a quick and easy way to protect themselves from the flu, without leaving the office. Wegmans makes it easy for employers to host an on-site flu clinic with online scheduling for employees, and the ability to bill individual plan sponsors or billing direct to employers. The employer on-site flu clinics are offered in all Wegmans market areas. For more information and to schedule an on-site flu clinic, visit the Wegmans pharmacy business partnership program on www.wegmans.com.

All Wegmans pharmacists are certified to administer immunizations through the American Pharmacists Associations' pharmacy-based immunization delivery program. Wegmans pharmacy employees can also assist customers who need help determining their insurance policy's coverage.

Wegmans Food Markets Inc. is a 108-store supermarket chain with stores located along the east coast.

Love Express, a 43-foot trailer with a tricked-out, fully functional fry kitchen, will also be serving up free fries to the local community for all to enjoy during the fundraiser.

Participating locations:

✓ Checkers – Buffalo Police Department – parking lot, 1969 Elmwood Ave., 2767 Bailey Ave.,

Serving free fries from 4-7 p.m. Live DJ and giveaways from 4-6 p.m.

✓ Checkers – Buffalo, 2665 Bailey Ave.

✓ Checkers – Cheektowaga, 2563 Union Road

✓ Checkers – Tonawanda, 2374 Niagara Falls Blvd.

A press release stated, "In May, the Buffalo community suffered a devastating act of violence when a gunman opened fire at the Tops Friendly Market on Jefferson Avenue, killing 10 people and wounding three." It noted the Buffalo 5/14 Survivors Fund provided direct financial assistance to the survivors of the deceased, and those directly affected by the shooting.

Checkers fundraiser for families affected by Tops shooting

From 4-7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 1, Checkers will donate \$1 from each Big Buford sale to the Buffalo 5/14 Survivors Fund. Checkers will partner with the Buffalo Police Department to honor and support all the families affected by the mass shooting.

Additionally, Checkers' Fry

Wound Center named Center of Excellence

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center announced The Wound Center of Niagara is a recipient of RestorixHealth's highest achievement: the Wound Center of Excellence award.

RestorixHealth, a management company that "develops and operates wound care centers nationwide, awards this achievement to centers that have demonstrated

exceptional success by meeting or exceeding the highest level of clinical and quality standards, including healing outcomes and safety, along with a patient satisfaction rate of 96% or higher."

The Wound Center of Niagara is one of the 21 centers, out of 187, that has achieved this designation.

"We are proud to be the recipient of this award, which not only reaffirms the quality of care that the center provides it patients every day, but also recognizes the hard work and dedication of our staff," said Michael Mitchell, M.D., the center's medical director and chief of surgery at Memorial.

A press release noted, "Memorial Medical Center's wound center is a specialized, outpatient wound care treatment center dedicated to the care of patients with chronic, nonhealing wounds such as those resulting from diabetes, circulatory problems, or injury resulting from radiation. The center is staffed by a multidisciplinary team of physicians along with nurses and technicians with advanced training in wound care, including hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Integrating a team of wound care professionals optimizes patient care, while offering the most advanced healing options."

The Wound Center of Niagara is located across the street from the medical center, at 620 10th St., Suite 700. For more information, call 716-278-4424 or visit www.nfmmc.org.

For more information on RestorixHealth, visit www.RestorixHealth.com.

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