PRESERVE THE PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM

March 8, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Alexander and Scott, Ranking Members Murray and Foxx:

What do healthy animals, safe and nutritious food grown in the United States and global trade have in common? What do sheep and goats, salmon and seals, cows and catfish, horses and pigs, giraffes and lions, chickens and turkeys, elk and bald eagles, tigers and bears have in common? The answer is highly educated and well-trained workforce of scientists, including veterinarians, animal scientists, dairy scientists, equine scientists, poultry scientists, marine biologists, zoologists, animal nutritionists, epidemiologists, pathologists, ecologists, veterinary technicians and many others.

What these scientific professionals have in common, aside from a love of animals and a commitment to their vocations, is educational debt. The reality is that many public-sector positions require advanced levels of training to fill demanding and specialized roles that are critical to ensuring community and societal needs are met. These individuals must devote years of their lives to rigorous educational programs in order to gain requisite knowledge, skills and experience needed to begin their careers, and many graduate with significant educational debt.

For far too many graduates, student loan debt is a crippling barrier to pursuing fulfilling careers in public service and they may be drawn to higher-paying, private sector roles in order to manage their student loan repayments on top of other life demands. The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program is a critical recruitment and retention tool to ensure an adequate pipeline to critical public-sector roles. The PSLF Program is critical now more than ever, particularly as federal, state, and local government employees prepare for looming workforce retirements. According to data published by Government Accountability Office, nearly 35% of federal employees will be eligible for retirement by fiscal year 2020.

Public-sector roles related to animal health and welfare include:

- Key positions at state departments of agriculture, fish and game departments and many other state and federal government agencies across the United States;
- Academic roles, including research and training to support the betterment of both animal and human health
- Providing important extension services to ranchers and farmers
• Research to develop and perfect new treatment methods, tests and vaccines; to surveil, combat, treat and ameliorate crippling and economically devastating animal diseases; and to conduct diagnostic tests on pathogens
• Ensuring food safety through inspection services
• Preserving habitat and wildlife conservation
• Care for animals in zoos and aquariums
• Treating animals in shelters

These professionals are counting on the U.S. Congress to keep their promise to them when it established the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. While in the program, they are working full-time in public sector positions for a minimum of ten years while repaying their student loans, after which time the remaining qualified educational debt is forgiven. Commitment to the program’s pathway is essential as many of the participating individuals have made financial and lifestyle changes to participate.

Absent PSLF, a career in the public sector would be infeasible for many professionals. Put bluntly, the program strengthens America’s workforce and is an essential tool in attracting veterinarians and other scientists to careers in the public sector. The continuation of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program will benefit our nation’s public institutions, advance animal health and welfare, foster scientific developments, help protect a healthy food supply, and ensure seamless continuation of critical activities at the state and federal levels.

We respectfully urge you to preserve the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

On behalf of 127 undersigned national and state organizations:

Alabama Veterinary Medical Association
Alaska State Veterinary Medical Association
American Animal Hospital Association
American Association of Avian Pathologists
American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Association of Equine Practitioners
American Association of Feline Practitioners
American Association of Food Safety and Public Health Veterinarians
American Association of Industry Veterinarians
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners
American Association of Swine Veterinarians
American Association of Veterinary Clinicians
American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians
American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians
American Association of Zoo Veterinarians
American Board of Veterinary Practitioners
American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine
American College of Veterinary Anesthesia and Analgesia
American College of Veterinary Behaviorists
American College of Veterinary Microbiologists
American College of Veterinary Surgeons
American Dairy Science Association
American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Animal Science
American Society of Laboratory Animal Practitioners
American Veterinary Epidemiology Society
American Veterinary Medical Association
Arizona Veterinary Medical Association
Arkansas Veterinary Medical Association
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Avian Veterinarians
Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine
California Veterinary Medical Association
Center for Animal Health in Appalachia
Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association
Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine
Delaware Veterinary Medical Association
District of Columbia Veterinary Medical Association
FASS
Florida Veterinary Medical Association
Georgia Veterinary Medical Association
Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association
Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association
Indiana Veterinary Medical Association
Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine
Iowa Veterinary Medical Association
Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine
Kansas Veterinary Medical Association
Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association
Lincoln Memorial University College of Veterinary Medicine
Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine
Louisiana Veterinary Medical Association
Maine Veterinary Medical Association
Maryland Veterinary Medical Association
Maryland Veterinary Medical Foundation
Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association
Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine
Michigan Veterinary Medical Association
Midwestern University College of Veterinary Medicine
Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association
Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine
Mississippi Veterinary Medical Association
Missouri Veterinary Medical Association
Montana Veterinary Medical Association
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multistate Initiative
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multi-state Initiative
National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials
National Association for Biomedical Research
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians
National Institute for Animal Agriculture
Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association
Nevada Veterinary Medical Association
New Hampshire Veterinary Medical Association
New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association
New Mexico Veterinary Medical Association
New York State Veterinary Medical Society
North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine
North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association
Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine
Ohio Veterinary Medical Association
Oklahoma Veterinary Medical Association
Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine
Oregon Veterinary Medical Association
Pennsylvania Veterinary Foundation
Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association
Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine
Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association
Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine
Society for Theriogenology
South Carolina Association of Veterinarians
South Dakota Animal Industry Board
South Dakota Veterinary Medical Association
Student American Veterinary Medical Association
Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association
Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences
Texas Veterinary Medical Association
Texas Veterinary Medical Foundation
Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine
U.S. Animal Health Association
U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholder Committee
University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine
University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Kentucky Department of Veterinary Science
University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine
University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine
Utah Veterinary Medical Association
Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
Veterinary Business Management Association
Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine
Washington State University
Washington State Veterinary Medical Association
West Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
Western University of Health Sciences
Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association
Wyoming Veterinary Medical Association

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
    Members of the House Committee on Education and Labor