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Docket ID: ED-2025-OPE-0944 – look at “Documents”

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To Whom It May Concern;

I am an Occupational Therapy Professional and I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent legislative changes that reclassify healthcare degrees—including Occupational Therapy—as no longer “professional degrees.” This reclassification directly impacts loan forgiveness programs and imposes new caps on federal loans available to students pursuing these careers. We urge you to take immediate action to protect healthcare degrees and the students who aspire to serve in these vital professions.

Occupational Therapy is a graduate-level discipline requiring advanced education, rigorous clinical training, and ongoing professional development. Practitioners play a critical role in helping individuals regain independence, participate fully in daily life, and achieve meaningful outcomes across the lifespan. From premature infants in neonatal intensive care units to older adults recovering from illness or injury, occupational therapists provide evidence-based, patient-centered care that is indispensable to Ohio’s communities and the nation at large.

The recent changes threaten to reduce access to these programs by limiting financial support for students. Graduate-level healthcare education is costly, and without adequate loan availability or forgiveness options, many qualified individuals will be unable to pursue these degrees. This will exacerbate existing workforce shortages, particularly in underserved areas, and compromise the delivery of essential rehabilitation and healthcare services. At a time when demand for occupational therapists and other allied health professionals continues to grow, these barriers to entry are especially troubling.

Furthermore, reclassifying healthcare degrees as non-professional diminishes the value of these fields and sends a harmful message about their legitimacy. Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Speech-Language Pathology, and other allied health professions are integral to interdisciplinary care teams. They require advanced expertise and should be recognized accordingly. Protecting the professional designation of these degrees is not only a matter of fairness to students but also a matter of safeguarding the infrastructure of our healthcare system.

We respectfully urge you to advocate for the restoration of professional status for healthcare degrees and to ensure that federal loan programs—including forgiveness options—remain accessible to students in these fields. By doing so, you will help sustain the pipeline of highly

trained clinicians, protect patient care, and affirm the essential role of healthcare professionals in strengthening our communities.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to supporting a strong healthcare workforce. We look forward to working with you to ensure that occupational therapists and other healthcare professionals can continue to thrive and serve those who depend on them.

Sincerely,
YOUR NAME