DATE

Erin Hetherington,

Director, Learning Branch,

Department of Employment and Social Development,

200 Montcalm Street,

Gatineau, Quebec J8Y 3B5

*Via email:* *EDSC.DGA.PCAFE.MCPP-SEC.CSFAP.LB.ESDC@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca*

Re: Canada Student Loans and Financial Assistance Regulations

This letter is to request that Physician Assistants (PAs) be added to the Student Loans Regulations and the Canada Student Financial Assistance Regulations so that PAs may be included in the Student Loan Forgiveness Program.

**ABOUT PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS**

PAs are physician extenders who practice medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician with negotiated autonomy. PAs are important members of healthcare teams, helping make it easier for patients to receive care as we play a crucial role in delivering comprehensive healthcare services in various medical settings, which include diagnosing, managing treatment plans, prescribing medication, performing procedures, and assisting in surgeries.

**PAs HELP REDUCE WAIT TIMES**

Adding PAs to primary care teams means that many doctors can offer more same-day appointments, alleviating strain on Emergency Departments. In the ED, PAs can help with throughput, limiting the number of people leaving without being seen. And when no physician remains in the community, PAs can help keep the ED open.

**PAs IN RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES**

In rural and remote areas, PAs significantly improve access to healthcare by providing home visits, care in Long-Term Care Facilities, hospital services, office procedures, after-hours consultations, and on-call coverage. Our presence enhances continuity of care, particularly for patients with chronic conditions. With over 1100 certified PAs working in Canada, our contributions have proven instrumental in delivering seamless and cost-effective care.

**PAs HELP GAIN EFFICIENCIES AND SAVE MONEY**

The Conference Board of Canada recently published a report [Unlocking Potential: Exploring Physician Assistant Funding Models and Impact Potential for Three Practice Settings](https://www.conferenceboard.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/unlocking-potential_oct2023.pdf). This report highlights the important role that PAs play in health systems across Canada and explores a new funding model that would make it easier for hospitals, primary care teams and physicians to employ PAs allowing for reduced wait times and better access to physicians.

I would like to practice in a rural or remote community. Adding PAs to the list of professionals eligible for loan forgiveness under the Federal Budget's program would help make it easier for me to do so. I also urge the government to encourage employer remunerated funding models that incorporate PAs at a discounted billing rate as this would to achieve significant financial efficiency, patient access to care, and potential savings for Canada’s healthcare system.

By incentivizing PAs to work in Canadian rural and under-served areas, we can enhance accessibility to quality healthcare for patients while generating substantial savings for the healthcare system. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Name, Credentials