



STATE OF ARKANSAS
SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS
GOVERNOR

April 22, 2024

Dear Secretary Cardona:

You will be in Little Rock tomorrow to tout President Biden's unconstitutional student loan forgiveness program and try and explain your department's disastrous rollout of updates to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). We welcome you to our state, but we fear that this visit will only serve to highlight some of your administration's worst mistakes.

The Biden Administration's forgiveness of certain student loans is unfair, unwise, and unlawful. Not only does it force Arkansans who chose not to attend college to pay for others' education, not only does it offer forgiveness for past loans with no plan to address the future growth of college tuition expenses, but it has also been declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. This administration's gleeful disregard for our nation's highest court should appall every American.

We are also deeply concerned about your mishandling of the FAFSA program. FAFSA provides a crucial avenue for young Arkansans seeking federal student aid. In our state, students are also required by statute to complete FAFSA before becoming eligible for higher education scholarships. The U.S. Department of Education's FAFSA platform, though, is functionally nonoperational, causing extreme delays, complexity, and difficulty for students and families.

Each week, new issues arise. Students, particularly from low-income families, need answers. State government needs clarity. Currently, we are "conditionally awarding" scholarships to ensure students know we intend to fund their state scholarship awards. If these issues continue, though, we will be forced to pull state dollars from other sources to ensure scholarships are funded.

Your department is a constant source of frustration for Americans and Arkansans. You've promised to shut down the nation's largest Christian university. You oppose education freedom. You attack parents who speak up for their children's education at school board meetings.

Here in Arkansas, we have taken a different approach. Through the Arkansas LEARNS Act, we have raised starting teacher pay from \$36,000 to \$50,000 – from 48th in the nation to top five – invested in

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literacy and career and technical education, are preparing to implement universal education freedom, and are protecting girls and girls' sports. During your visit, we hope you see that Arkansas is leading on education while the U.S. Department of Education is leaving students and families behind.

The botched FAFSA update, the unlawful student debt forgiveness program, and so much more have created a mess. I hope that your visit to Little Rock offers more than just empty words for struggling Arkansans.

Sincerely,



Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders



Arkansas Secretary of Education Jacob Oliva