

December 17, 2024

Dr. Miguel Cardona, Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

I am writing to follow up on my December 21, 2023 request to reiterate the Connecticut Office of Higher Education's (OHE) full support for the discharge of federal student loan debt for former Stone Academy students through the Borrower Defense to Repayment program. I understand that the Office of the Attorney General has submitted a Borrower Defense Repayment Application on behalf of more than 800 students. **Specifically, this request applies to students who were actively enrolled in Stone's practical nursing program on or after November 1, 2021 through February 24, 2023 when the school abruptly closed.**

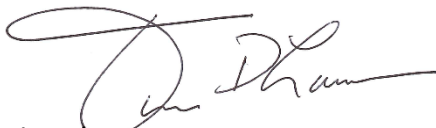
As you are aware, Stone Academy ceased operations in early 2023 after being placed on Heightened Cash Monitoring 2 (HCM2) by the U.S. Department of Education. This closure followed numerous violations cited by my office in December 2021. Subsequently, an OHE audit of student transcripts revealed that many educational experiences, particularly clinical hours, did not comply with state regulations.

In addition, the Connecticut Office of the Attorney General brought legal action against Career Training Specialists, LLC d/b/a Stone Academy, Paier College of Art (Paier College), and Joseph Bierbaum, part owner and managing member of Stone Academy and President and owner of Paier College, regarding Stone Academy and its owners' deceptive and unfair business practices that harmed the Stone Academy students.

Two years later, I sincerely hope you will grant loan discharges under Borrower Defense for all impacted Stone Academy students given there is substantial evidence of misrepresentation by Stone Academy and its leadership. Providing this financial relief would offer much-needed support to these students as they continue working toward careers in healthcare.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to protecting students from institutional misconduct.

Sincerely,



Timothy D. Larson
Commissioner

Cc: Attorney General William Tong