

One Wisconsin Now: Delivers testimony before federal government committee considering changes to student loan rules

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KENOSHA, Wis. — One Wisconsin Now Program Director Analiese Eicher today delivered testimony at a public hearing before a federal negotiated rule-making committee convened by the U.S Department of Education. The committee has been tasked with proposing changes to rules governing federal student loans and accrediting higher education institutions, including for profit colleges, so that students can use their federal loans there to help finance their education.

Eicher opened noting:

“Since Secretary DeVos took office she has made every effort to reverse course on higher education rules meant to protect students and borrowers. Rules respecting state sovereignty and oversight of distance education have been delayed, student loan forgiveness for students defrauded by their institutions have been ignored and weakened, and the gainful employment rules protecting students who graduate from certain programs have been gutted.”

She instead urged the committee members:

“We need to strengthen, not weaken, federal and state oversight of our higher education system. Fewer protections for students and spending tax dollars on irresponsible institutions has historically shown to serve students and taxpayers poorly.”

Gov. Scott Walker also has a role to play when it comes to this issue. However, Walker has made things worse, not better by eliminating the Education Approval Board (EAB) in the 2017 state budget. The EAB was created in 1944 to oversee institutions like for profit colleges and to protect consumers. The functions of this formerly independent agency were transferred to the Department of Safety and Professional Services and experienced staff, including the executive director position, were either eliminated or not retained and were instead replaced by staff with no experience with the industry.

Concluding her testimony, Eicher said:

“Students and borrowers are not asking for much. They are asking to be treated fairly in a system that does not treat them fairly. Unfortunately the DeVos Department of Education and the Walker administration are moving to make the problems worse, not better.”