

February 26, 2021

Sherrod Brown
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

Patrick J. Toomey
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

Dear Chairman Brown and Ranking Member Toomey:

The 34 undersigned organizations representing students and student loan borrowers are writing to urge the swift confirmation of FTC Commissioner and former Student Loan Ombudsman Rohit Chopra to serve as the next Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. For more than a decade, Chopra has served as a fierce advocate for students, student loan borrowers, and their families. His clarity of vision and demonstrated track record as a regulator make him an extraordinary selection.

As a Commissioner at the FTC, Chopra has articulated a bold vision for how to regulate predatory actors across the higher education sector—urging muscular enforcement and championing a role for government as the protector of the most vulnerable students, many of whom have been preyed upon by schools and companies that exploit the pursuit of the American Dream.¹ As advocates for these students and millions of others, we believe Commissioner Chopra is uniquely qualified to lead the CFPB and do what is right for all consumers.

Chopra's leadership as a member of the Federal Trade Commission is only the latest role in a long career as an advocate and regulator focused on protecting students and student loan borrowers. Chopra served as the CFPB's first student loan ombudsman, where he was among the first government officials to warn about the far-reaching effects of student debt on the economy and on society.² In this role Chopra also fought to force private student lenders to treat borrowers fairly and offer affordable loan payments to those in financial distress.³

¹ <https://www.ftc.gov/public-statements/2019/12/statement-commissioner-rohit-chopra-matter-university-phoenix-inc>; <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-116-ba00-wstate-chopra-20190926.pdf>

² <https://www.banking.senate.gov/download/chopra-testimony-6-25-13>

³ <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/struggling-private-student-loan-borrowers-still-searching-for-help/>

Under his leadership, the Bureau repeatedly faced down the largest companies in the student loan market. For example, Chopra led an effort that spurred the Department of Justice and the FDIC to hold Sallie Mae and Navient accountable for overcharging tens of thousands of active duty servicemembers by denying them protections earned through their military service.⁴ Similarly, Chopra helped establish the first federal supervision of the student loan servicing industry—subjecting private-sector financial services firms, including the largest government contractors, to routine oversight as they handled loan payments for tens of millions of people.⁵ Collectively, these efforts have returned tens of millions of dollars to students and student loan borrowers and strengthened industry practices affecting millions of people.

Chopra also served as an early and frequent critic of the role for-profit colleges play in driving the nation’s student debt crisis. As student loan ombudsman, Chopra led the CFPB in its effort to hold accountable failed for-profit college chains Corinthian Colleges and ITT Tech.⁶ As an outgrowth of this work, Chopra also pressed the Obama administration to deliver debt relief to hundreds of thousands of students defrauded by these predatory schools—work that the Biden administration has pledged to finally see through to completion.

The next CFPB Director will inherit an enormous set of consumer protection challenges left behind by an administration that prioritized the interests of financial companies over American families. This includes a specific set of challenges facing students and student loan borrowers. For example, the student loan industry continues to trample on borrowers’ rights, violating a wide range of federal and state consumer laws in the process. Similarly, a newly resurgent for-profit college industry has exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to recruit newly vulnerable students with empty promises of a brighter future. At the same time, new financial firms tout “innovative” products that may discriminate against borrowers of color and exacerbate the structural barriers to equity and opportunity that have long plagued the American economy.

On each of these enormous challenges and on many others, Chopra’s leadership promises a better future for students, student loan borrowers, and their families. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to quickly confirm Rohit Chopra to serve as the next Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-60-million-settlement-sallie-mae-resolve-allegations-charging>

⁵ <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/newsroom/written-testimony-of-rohit-chopra-before-the-committee-on-the-budget/>

⁶ <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/newsroom/cfpb-secures-480-million-in-debt-relief-for-current-and-former-corinthian-students/>; <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/newsroom/cfpb-sues-for-profit-college-chain-itt-for-predatory-lending/>

Sincerely,

Americans for Financial Reform

Student Borrower Protection Center

Alliance for Youth Action

American Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO

Campaign for America's Future

Center for Responsible Lending

Coalition for Social Justice

Community Service Society of New York

Consumer Action

Democrats for Education Reform

Education Reform Now

Empire Justice Center

Fosterus

Generation Progress

Hildreth Institute

Housing and Economic Rights Advocates

Housing and Family Services of Greater New York

IMPACCT Brooklyn

Mobilization for Justice

National Association for College Admission Counseling

National Association of Consumer Advocates

National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys (NACBA)

National Community Reinvestment Coalition

National Education Association

New Economy Project

Ohio Student Association

Project on Predatory Student Lending

Public Good Law Center

Robert Shireman, Higher Education Director, The Century Foundation

Rockland Housing Action Coalition, Inc.

Student Debt Crisis

Student Defense

U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)

Woodstock Institute