

# HIGHER EDUCATION ACT *Reauthorization*

## The Needs of Graduate Students



### We urge you to support and co-sponsor legislation that:

- Provides **increased financial support** for University-based research
- Improves the **working conditions** of graduate student researchers, including providing mental, physical, and financial support
- Expands access to **diverse professional development** opportunities

### Current legislation that we urge you to support includes:

- Higher Education Mental Health Commission Act (S.3106)
- College Transparency Acts (S.1121)
- Civil Rights Transparency Act (H.R.6537 )
- Empowering Students Through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act (H.R.1635)
- Aim Higher Act (H.R.6543)

## Graduate Student Life

Graduate students suffer from extreme rates of mental health problems, six times that of the general population [1]:

- Globally, 41% showed moderate to severe anxiety and 39% moderate to severe depression. These numbers are higher in vulnerable populations. [1]
- 42-48% of science and engineering students at UC Berkeley are depressed. [2]

Graduate students with poor mental health report having negative relationships with their advisors, mentors, and PIs and report having a poor work-life balance. [1]

10-13% of graduate students are parents. [3,4] Yet, in 2009, only 13% of AAU Universities provided maternity leave to doctoral students, and only 5% offered dependent health care. [3]

## Financial Climate

In 2012-2013, the average cumulative debt for an undergraduate was \$29,000, \$57,000 (masters), and \$75,000 (doctoral) - and \$146,000 for a professional degree. [5]

Graduate students comprise 13% of the borrowing population, borrowing 40% of all loan dollars, and account for 77% of student loan profit [6]

Many graduate students live at near or below the living wage for single-person home [8] and must do so for around 8 years [7, 9]

Student loan debt has been compared to indentured servitude due to the increased time it takes to earn a degree, high loan payments, and modest academic salaries. [9]

## Research and Professional Needs

Jobs in academia are decreasing significantly, and graduate students need training for diverse career fields. [10, 11]

Accessing published research is difficult because it is hidden behind a paywall, even though most is federally-funded. [12]

NIH hosts a free-to-public publication database - PubMed Central. More than 700,000 access it each weekday: ~25% are from universities, 40% are from the general public, and 17% are from industry [13].

At least 50 major publishers support open-access models [14]

**39-41%**

Graduate students with moderate to severe anxiety and depression [1]

**25%**

Graduate students with ~\$100,000 in student debt [6]

**~83%**

Universities that don't provide maternity leave [3]

**8 years**

Average time-to-degree, often spent under the living wage [6,7,8]

**700,000**

users access PubMed every weekday [16]

**57%**

PubMed users from the general public and industry [17]

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