



State of Connecticut Office of Higher Education

December 19, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Cardona,

The Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE) is in full support of former students from Stone Academy, who were actively enrolled on or after November 1, 2021, in the practical nursing program, having their federal student loan debt discharged through the borrower defense to repayment. It is my understanding that a Borrower Defense Repayment Application submission will be forthcoming on behalf of more than 800 students.

As you are aware, Stone Academy closed its doors after it was put on Heightened Cash Monitoring 2 (HCM2) by the US Department of Education. Prior to closure, OHE had found evidence of compliance issues and issued to the school a Compliance Conference Letter outlining eight violations on December 20, 2022. Subsequent to closure, an investigation by the Connecticut Office of Attorney General found considerable evidence of violations under the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA) and filed a [lawsuit against Stone Academy, Paier College of Art and their owner Joseph Bierbaum](#). OHE also conducted an independent review of transcripts and other academic records for students who were actively enrolled at the school anytime on or after November 1, 2021, until the time of closure on February 24, 2023. A summary of this review, which I have also included, found that a substantial number of educational experiences, particularly clinical hours, were not in compliance with state regulations and therefore could not be used by students toward licensing based on state regulations regarding practical nursing education.

Given the various findings from our office and from the Office of the Attorney General, we believe there is sufficient evidence of misrepresentation by Stone Academy and its leadership to warrant loan discharges under Borrower Defense for these affected students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy D. Larson", is written over a circular stamp or seal that is partially obscured.

Timothy D. Larson
Executive Director

Cc: Attorney General William Tong

Ned Lamont, Governor · Timothy D. Larson, Executive Director
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