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September 9, 2014

The Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association strongly endorses the Adjunct Faculty Loan Fairness Act of 2014 recently introduced into Congress by Senator Dick Durbin, which would extend to part-time faculty eligibility for student loan forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness act. Our support for this bill is in keeping with our organization's broader support for measures to improve the conditions of adjunct faculty.

Adjunct teachers, who are often consigned to part-time work, make a vital contribution to the education of students without which post-secondary institutions could not fully execute their educational mission. According to the AAUP, more than fifty percent of all faculty have part-time appointments and generally teach core rather than specialized courses. Part-time faculty clearly perform a public service just as much as full-time faculty, and should receive the same consideration for it.

The use of adjunct teachers has long been a concern among academics because of the low pay and often, when part-time, lack of benefits. Further, economic pressure can force job seekers to accept positions where they provide the same educational service as those in full-time and tenured or tenure-track positions but typically for much reduced compensation. The inequity of this situation is compounded by the inequity created by the current eligibility requirements for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). Adjunct faculty employed for less than 30 hours per week are currently ineligible for loan forgiveness after 10 years of public service employment and qualifying loan payments. Thus, despite playing the same important role as other teachers in producing a highly trained workforce, adjunct teachers cannot apply their years in adjunct teaching toward the PSLF program. Given the shortage of full-time teaching positions, in order to be eligible for debt relief, adjunct teachers would need to leave their service at educational institutions and enter some other public service work.

The Board of Officers of the APA joins the American Historical Association in strongly urging members of Congress to turn the Durbin bill into law.

Signed,



Cheshire Calhoun, chair
for the Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association