



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMUNITY BOARD 9
MANHATTAN

Morningside Heights
Manhattanville
Hamilton Heights
Sugar Hill

December 19, 2025

Hon. Adriano Espaillat

Congressman, 13th Congressional District
Adam Clayton Powell State Office Building
163 West 125th Street, Suite 508
New York, NY 10027

Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand

Senator Leo W. O'Brien Federal Office Bldg.
11A Clinton Ave, Rm 821
Albany, NY 12207

Hon. Charles Schumer

Senator 780 Third Avenue, Suite 2301
New York, NY 10017

Dear Congressman Espaillat and Senators Gillibrand and Schumer,

At its regularly scheduled General Board Meeting held on Thursday, December 18, 2025, Manhattan Community Board No. 9 passed the following Letter of Support re: **Requesting urgent action in response to the Department of Education's definition of "professional degrees" under HR 1 or the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)** by unanimous consent with 29 members present:

The provisions in this bill determine which graduate programs qualify for higher federal student loan limits. While it includes degrees such as medicine (M.D.), pharmacy (Pharm.D.), dentistry (D.D.S./D.M.D.), optometry (O.D.), law (J.D.), veterinary medicine (D.V.M.), osteopathic medicine (D.O.), podiatry (D.P.M.), chiropractic (D.C.), theology (M.Div.), and clinical psychology, it **excludes some of the most important professional fields including nursing (MSN, DNP), teaching (MEd, MAT, EdD), social work (MSW, DSW), and public health (PMH, DrPH).**

Excluding nursing, teaching, social work, and public health from professional degree status will limit access to advanced training, restrict federal loan support, and dramatically shrink the pipeline of qualified workers at a time when these fields are already suffering from catastrophic workforce shortages, particularly in the under-served communities where these professionals

are most needed. These omissions will have immediate, direct, and harmful consequences for Harlem and communities like ours.

Nurses make up the largest component of the healthcare workforce and provide the majority of hands-on patient care in the US. **Teachers** are the foundation of our society, shaping the minds and promoting the development of our children. **Social workers** provide the overwhelming majority of behavioral health services and provide critical support for vulnerable populations. **Public health workers** make up the backbone of our health system by preventing disease, improving community health, and ensuring equitable access to care.

Importantly, the omission of these professions from the “professional degree” favored status threatens to widen existing gender and racial inequities. Nursing, teaching, social work, and public health are **predominantly women-led fields**, with many Black, Latina, immigrant, and first-generation students pursuing these degrees. These students already face disproportionate debt burdens and pay inequities. Cutting access to necessary financial support will deepen these disparities and block students from the very careers our community desperately needs.

For Harlem, the stakes are high:

- Higher barriers to entering nursing, teaching, social work, and public health fields
- Fewer trained professionals available to address chronic disease, mental health, child development, educational attainment, aging, food insecurity, housing instability, maternal mortality, and environmental health risks
- Fewer faculty members in these professions to train the next generation of practitioners
- Setbacks to ongoing efforts to strengthen community resilience
- Direct harm to the institutions that serve the 13th Congressional District, New York City, and New York State

We ask you to stand with us and push for the **full inclusion of nursing, teaching, social work, and public health degrees** in the definition of “professional degrees.” This is a matter of community health, workforce stability, and equity. We cannot build a strong future while shutting the door on the students who want to serve our community in these essential professions.

We further, **categorically, reject any proposal to limit the financing of professional degrees to \$50,000 per year**. This presents yet another unjustifiable impediment to professional licensing that disproportionately impacts our members of our community. Financing must be kept at full cost of attendance (COA) with lower interest rates.

Manhattan Community Board 9 is ready to support your advocacy on this issue and to mobilize community voices as needed. Thank you for your continued leadership and for fighting for the well-being of Harlem residents.

If you have any questions and/or further information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me or District Manager, Eutha Prince, at the board office (646) 355 - 3172.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Victor Edwards".

Victor Edwards
Chair

cc: Hon. Kathy Hochul, Governor
Hon. Anthony Delgado, Lt. Governor
Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor
Hon. Letitia James, Attorney General
Hon. Brad Lander, NYC Comptroller
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Cordell Cleare, New York State Senate
Hon. Chuck Schumer, New York State Senate
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Hon. Micah Lasher, Assembly Member
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Shaun Abreu, City Council Member
Hon. Yusef Salaam, City Council Member