

Ways and Means Member Hearing Day – Tuesday, June 4  
Rep. Rodney Davis Testimony

**HR 1043, the Employer Participation in Repayment Act**

Thank you, Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady for allowing me to testify before you today. I'm going to be talking about several priorities that this committee holds jurisdiction over.

Right now, The average student graduates with over \$32,000 in student loan debt, and the average graduate student carries a debt of about \$65,000. It now represents the second highest form of consumer debt in America – in fact; 44.7 million Americans are responsible for \$1.52 trillion in student debt, collectively.

HR 1043, the Employer Participation in Repayment Act is a real, tangible plan that if passed and implemented, would put our students on the right track to controlling their debt.

This legislation, which I have introduced the last several congresses and this year with my colleague from Massachusetts, Scott Peters (who is also testifying today), would allow businesses to help pay down their employees' student loan debt, up to \$5,250.50 per year, tax free. This is based on the current model for tuition reimbursement, which allows employers to reimburse their employees for tuition up to the same amount.

Right now, our bill has 144 cosponsors and holds strong support from a coalition of over 75 education and business organizations. Businesses and corporations are already offering this benefit to their employees, but there is clear support and evidence that if this bill passes, even more companies will jump in.

I appreciate this committee's consideration of this legislation and I look forward to working with each and every one of you to get this bipartisan legislation to the floor where it will pass with strong support.

## **HR 141, the Social Security Fairness Act**

I also wanted to take a moment to talk about another bipartisan bill that has sat in this committee for years. HR 141, the Social Security Fairness Act is a bipartisan initiative that would fix our downright unfair Social Security System in this country that penalizes public servants like our teachers, police officers and firefighters.

This bill would repeal both the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset portions of the Social Security Act.

The bill is about more than getting rid of bad policy, it's about supporting America's teachers, first responders and those who dedicate their lives to public service. It's about ensuring a teacher who spends his or her summers working a second job or a police officer who changes careers after years of service will not face a possible 40 percent reduction in their Social Security benefits. Our amendment makes sure they get their hard-earned benefits they paid into.

I have heard time and time again from teachers in my district on how important this legislation is to them. I have had teachers and public servants from across the country call my office urging us to pass this legislation. The Ways and Means Committee has examined multiple ways to improve retirement in this country and this bill certainly falls under that purview.

The bill enjoys broad, bipartisan support with over 175 cosponsors and support from the Senior Citizens League, National Education Association, National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare, Fraternal Order of Police, National Association of Letter Carriers, International Association of Fire Fighters, and National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association.

It's time to finally take action on this important bill that will improve the lives of numerous Americans across the country. Again, I appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with all members of this committee to see a vote on HR 141 this Congress.

## **HR 1570 and HR 2234**

Shifting now to healthcare, my wife is a survivor of early-onset colorectal cancer, and because of this, I strongly advocate for screening access. As such, I urge your consideration of H.R. 1570, the Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act of 2019. This legislation waives Medicare's cost-sharing requirements for the removal of polyps or tissue during colorectal cancer screenings. While the colorectal cancer screening itself has no cost-share, the costs associated with the potential removal of tissue can act as a deterrent to individuals who would otherwise be screened. With 254 co-sponsors, your attention to this legislation is appreciated.

Another piece of legislation I would like to discuss is H.R. 2234, the Jonny Wade Pediatric Cancer Research Act. Jonny was a remarkable young man I was fortunate enough to meet before brain cancer took him from us far too soon at the age of eight. Cancer is the second leading cause of death for children yet only 4% of cancer research funds go to children – we must do more. For this reason, I introduced this legislation which transfers the \$372.8 Million sitting idly in the Presidential Election Campaign Fund to the 10-Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund. Once there, NIH can use the funds to research pediatric diseases and conditions including cancer. Jonny never wanted another kid to have cancer, and I will always advocate on his behalf for more pediatric cancer research funding.

## **Other Initiatives/Bills**

I also wanted to take this opportunity today to discuss a couple other bills that will improve conditions for graduate students and greatly improve our apprenticeship programs.

**HR 1842, the Graduate Assistant Parity Act** would allow all graduate students who are employees of educational institutions to exclude tuition reductions from their gross income, correcting an error that currently penalizes graduate assistants who work for sports teams.

**HR 1774, the LEAP Act** is a bipartisan bill that allows employers a business-related tax credit of \$1,500 for hiring an apprenticeship employee under age 25 and \$1,000 credit for hiring an apprentice who is over 25. The average age of apprentices is currently as high as 29. We must do more to prepare our young people for the workforce and as many of us here today know, success doesn't always require a 4-year degree – the LEAP Act would open numerous doors for our young people to learn and perfect a trade, and become an even better member of our workforce as a whole.

Finally, I would like to take a second to express my strong support for the newly-negotiated USMCA. When this agreement becomes law, American workers and businesses will benefit greatly while having tariff-free access to sell United States products in Mexico and Canada while ensuring American jobs are kept here in America. I look forward to its passage and appreciate Ranking Member Brady's leadership on this, as well as other tough trade issues facing our country right now.