

Urgent Action Needed: Protect Public Health Professional Degrees

The Department of Education's newly **proposed definition** of "professional degrees" under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) excludes public health degrees such as the MPH and DrPH, as well as several other health professions degrees. This poses significant consequences for our students, our institutions, and the nation's public health workforce.

This change could restrict access to critical federal loan support and undermine efforts to prepare the public health workforce our communities rely on.

ASPPH recently co-led a **coalition letter** to the Department of Education's RISE Committee ahead of its second negotiated rulemaking session on the definition of "professional degrees" under OBBBA. This letter, developed with a broad coalition of health professions and education partners, builds on ASPPH's earlier coalition efforts, including a **FASHP letter**, an American Council on Education (ACE) **public comment letter**, and ASPPH's **August public comment**. ASPPH will also meet with key congressional committees of jurisdiction to discuss the implications of the Department's proposal.

With the rulemaking process underway, now is the moment for ASPPH members to take coordinated, proactive action.

Here's how you can get involved:

1. Contact your Congressional delegation
 - Identify your institution's **U.S. Representatives and Senators**.
 - Work with your university Government Relations (GR) team to personally engage your delegation regarding concerns with the proposal.
 - Highlight how excluding public health professional degrees would raise financial barriers for students, limit program accessibility, and weaken the public health workforce pipeline.
 - **Here are some [talking points](#) to help make your case and specific "asks" for Congress to take action. You can also utilize ASPPH's form letter [\[HERE\]](#).**
 - Prioritize outreach to members serving on the **Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee**, the **House Education & the Workforce Committee**, and the **House** and **Senate** Appropriations Committees.
 - ASPPH members should also report back to ASPPH's Chief External Relations and Advocacy Officer, Tim Leshan, at tleshan@aspph.org and/or ASPPH's Director of Advocacy and Federal Affairs, Beeta Rasouli, at brasouli@aspph.org with feedback so we know which offices are interested in taking action.
2. Gather and share impact data
 - It is important to amplify institution-level evidence: impacts on students, program operations, enrollment, affordability, and workforce readiness.

- Collect data specific to your institution, such as student debt levels, projected loan-limit shortfalls, enrollment vulnerability, and workforce placement impacts.
- Share your data with your congressional offices and with ASPPH so we can continue to build a unified, compelling case by contacting ASPPH's Director of Advocacy and Federal Relations, Beeta Rasouli, at brasouli@aspph.org.

3. Prepare to submit comments when the rule is released

- A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) is expected soon.
- Once published, institutions will have 30 days to submit formal comments.
- Even though we know ED's position, it is essential that ASPPH members submit comments to formalize our concerns. ASPPH will once again submit formal comments, as we have done in the previous comment period. You may use our [prior letter](#) as a reference, and we will also share the updated version we are preparing for this cycle. We encourage you to use these materials as a framework to develop and submit your own comments.

4. Indicate interest in potential legal action

- ASPPH is exploring the feasibility of a coordinated lawsuit if the rule is finalized in a manner harmful to public health education. We will assess member readiness and update you at a later time.

5. Engage in a coordinated communications and op-ed strategy

- Increased public visibility is needed. ASPPH will spearhead a media push with key trade publications and podcasts, as this issue is not currently a top priority for the press.
- ASPPH also encourages you to utilize our [OpEd template](#) and work with your media relations team to distribute. Please share any OpEds, letters to the editor, articles, or other work you do regarding this issue with ASPPH's Director of Communication, Liz Mace, lmace@aspph.org.
- If your institution has faculty, students, or community partners with powerful stories, please share them on social media and with ASPPH's Director of Communication, Liz Mace, at lmace@aspph.org for coordinated outreach and/or submit a story [here](#).