June 12, 2018

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than 400,000 members of the American Bar Association, I urge you to oppose H.R. 4508, the PROSPER Act, so long as it contains a provision that would end the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program (PSLF). Our members include prosecutors, public defenders, civil legal attorneys, military lawyers, and other public service lawyers whose jobs promote public safety, uphold the rule of law, and make Americans more resilient in times of crisis. The legal profession is in the front lines of addressing national problems like crime, the opioid crisis, natural disasters, and helping military and veterans’ families access the programs and services they are owed. Without PSLF, the organizations that provide life- and livelihood-sustaining services will be even farther away from being able to meet these important challenges.

In 2007, PSLF was the solution to a serious problem facing public sector employers. As the cost increased for the education requirements for professional licensure, graduates became less able to accept positions in lower-paying public service jobs. While graduates have career options, public service agencies do not usually have discretion to refuse to provide critical services. Ending PSLF will remove the most effective recruitment and retention tool available to many rural communities and nonprofit organizations.

There is no data to support such a far-reaching and drastic measure as ending PSLF. We have known for over a decade that such information would be needed, but even today, there is no plan to study the program’s effectiveness or what impact ending the program would have on the many communities that rely on it. While there should be an effort to obtain the missing data and to improve transparency around the program’s administration, PSLF is more important now than ever, and ending the program would only hurt those employers, borrowers, and the public it was meant to help. Thus we urge you to oppose H.R. 4508.

Sincerely,

Hilarie Bass