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## Grad Tax Scrapped in Final Tax Bill

*Activism from thousands of UAW members helped end the measure*

**Washington, DC** - Today, Congress voted to approve a final tax plan. In contrast to the original House version of the bill, the final bill does not contain a tax on tuition waivers. The proposed tax would have doubled or tripled taxes for graduate workers, as well as taxing the earned tuition benefits of other workers at academic institutions.

This proposed tax was widely viewed as a direct attack on America's graduate and academic workers and spurred around-the-clock activism from the United Auto Workers' higher education locals. Tens of thousands of graduate workers made phone calls, participated in rallies, signed petitions, wrote opinion pieces, and joined a national walk-out to protest the plan, which would have taxed them at rates higher than those proposed for millionaires.

UAW graduate workers at universities across the country, including Columbia, Boston College, Harvard, Northeastern and Boston University, made significant contributions to the fight against the "grad tax." This, despite the fact that a number of these universities have refused to officially recognize their graduate employee unions.

"Let me be clear: this is still a terrible bill," said Marena Lin, a Harvard PhD student in Earth and Planetary Sciences. "But it is less terrible because of the work of thousands of UAW members, who stood up and said no to the Republican plan to tax us on our tuition waivers, which is money our universities pay to themselves and that we never see."

"Together, graduate workers prevented Congress from creating yet another barrier to affordable and accessible higher education," said Gage Martin, a Boston College PhD student in Math. "Tuition waivers promote diversity by enabling universities to attract the best and brightest from across the globe regardless of economic means or background. Taxing tuition waivers would have further impoverished graduate workers, dramatically reduced wages and restricted access to graduate school as an institution. It was an awful policy and we are proud to have helped stop it."

This work to preserve the tuition waiver exemption is the latest in a string of efforts undertaken by a growing national movement of graduate workers. By forming graduate unions, these workers build their collective power to promote an environment that fosters quality teaching and research, and to influence federal policies affecting the work they do on behalf of their institutions.

"Graduate workers were targeted in the tax reform bill because we currently don't have the same platform that other special interest groups do," said Olga Brudastova, a Columbia PhD student in Civil Engineering. "UAW graduate workers across the country stood up and pushed back against this harmful policy. I strongly believe that if Columbia or Boston College stop opposing our unions and instead recognize us, we could work together with our administrations to have even more political power to fight back against attacks on higher education like this one."

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