Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Leader Schumer, Leader Pelosi, Chairman Hatch, Chairman Brady, Ranking Member Wyden, and Ranking Member Neal:

We the undersigned write to express our grave concern with a provision in H.R. 1, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, that would result in a significant tax increase on graduate students. The House bill would eliminate the exclusion of “qualified tuition reductions” from taxable income. The effect would be to tax the value of tuition waivers that graduate students receive in exchange for serving as teaching or research assistants during their course of study. Tuition waivers are money that students never see, and by including it in their taxable income, some could see their tax bills double or worse.¹² For example, the University of Illinois estimates that its graduate students receiving tuition waivers would see their taxable income increase by $19,000 on average.³ With 55% of graduate students nationwide earning an adjusted gross income of $20,000 or less, and 87%
earning $50,000 or less, they cannot afford a major increase in their tax burden. In the words of one student, "that would push us to the poverty line." 

As you know, the United States is one of the most innovative countries in the world, thanks in no small part to our top-notch graduate education system. American graduate students go on to become top scientists, engineers, researchers, and leaders, and they generate many of the innovations that drive our economy. If this provision becomes law, the effect will be to make graduate school unaffordable for thousands of students, with dire consequences for our knowledge-driven economy.

We hold a variety of different views on this tax reform legislation, but we all agree that limiting access to graduate education is not the way to grow the economy and create jobs. We urge you to remove the provision taxing graduate school tuition waivers from the final version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Sincerely,

Daniel Lipinski
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Michael Capuano
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

Jackie Rosen
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Donald Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

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4https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Taxation-Finance/Aid-Students-Families/Qualified-Tuition-Reduction-117d.pdf

Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress

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Louise M. Slaughter  
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Aum Garamendi  
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Ro Khanna  
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Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor  
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Peter King  
Member of Congress