STATE OF WISCONSIN )
COUNTY OF ROCK )

This is to certify that this Resolution (Resolution No. 19-4A-222) is a true and correct copy of the original as passed by the Rock County Board of Supervisors at a meeting of said Board held in the Rock County Courthouse, Janesville, Wisconsin, on Thursday, April 11, 2019.

Given under my hand and Official Seal of the County of Rock, State of Wisconsin, this 12th day of April, 2019.

Lisa Tollefson
Rock County Clerk
RESOLUTION
ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SUPERVISORS THOMAS
BRIEN AND KARA HAWES
INITIATED BY

COUNTRY BOARD STAFF
SUBMITTED BY

CORPORATION COUNSEL
RICHARD GREENLEE
DRAFTED BY

March 20, 2019
DATE DRAFTED

SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE HIGHER EDUCATION AND LOWER STUDENT DEBT

WHEREAS, as student debt has continued to climb, it is clear there is an immediate need for action to ensure higher education remain an affordable option for students both during their college years and during their repayment period; and

WHEREAS, according to the New York Federal Reserve, total student debt nationwide has tripled in the past decade and now exceeds all credit card debt in the United States. Research done by one Wisconsin Institute shows that nearly thirty percent of households in the state are currently paying a student loan. Current policies prevent borrowers from being able to refinance to take advantage of low interest rates and make it nearly impossible to discharge student loans through bankruptcy; and

WHEREAS, the growing student debt burden has direct impacts on our state and local economy. Residents with student loan debt were more likely to forego the purchase of a new vehicle and more likely to rent rather than own a home. Funds tied to student loan payments are not available for discretionary spending at local businesses, stalling the engine of our local economy; and

WHEREAS, in addition to borrowing, we recognize that need-based aid such as the Pell grant is essential to many students’ ability to afford a college education. The federal government must find ways to strengthen and sustain this aid if education is to continue to be a path to greater equality in our community and an opportunity to ensure that every individual, regardless of socioeconomic status, has the opportunity to succeed; and

WHEREAS, it is important for student borrowers to have access to a variety of repayment options in order to best fit their needs and goals. Current repayment options also include a possibility of loan forgiveness after ten years of repayment during employment in public service or with a government employer. As a government employer, we must do our part to ensure employees are aware of this option and potential benefit of employment with Rock County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors, on this 11th day of April, 2019, does hereby direct the Department of Human Resources to ensure each employee is notified annually that they may be eligible for public service loan forgiveness of federal direct loans repaid during their employment with Rock County and that the Department of Human Resources is further directed to, upon request for an employee, complete any necessary paperwork to provide proof of employment to those employees who are eligible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors urges Congress to adopt legislation which would allow borrowers to refinance existing student loan debt to address the growing student loan debt crisis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors urges the State Legislature to support the state Higher Ed, Lower Debt bill, which would allow borrowers to refinance loans and create a tax break for state residents actively paying back student loans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors urges state and federal leaders to pursue additional solutions to the student debt burden, including policies that invest in the Pell grant program, reduce interest rates for future loans, and ensure tuition is affordable.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors recognizes the State of Wisconsin for its effort in reducing the cost of education in the University of Wisconsin System.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Clerk be authorized and directed to send a copy of this resolution to Governor Evers, the office of each member of congress representing the citizens of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Counties Association.

Respectfully submitted:

COUNTY BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE

[Signatures]

Louis Peer
Absent

Sherry Oja
Finance Director

FISCAL NOTE:
No fiscal impact to the County.

LEGAL NOTE:
The County Board is authorized to take action to inform and assist its employees with navigating student loan forgiveness programs pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 59.51. The remaining parts of the resolution are advisory only.

Richard Greenlee
Corporation Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:
Matter of policy.

Josh Smith
County Administrator