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## Graduate Student Healthcare Petition

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To: Douglas Rees <dcrees@caltech.edu>, "Shepherd, Joseph E." <joseph.e.shepherd@caltech.edu>, tirrell@caltech.edu, president@caltech.edu

Cc: "Stephenson, Oliver L. (Ollie)" <Oliver.Stephenson@caltech.edu>

Dear Dean Rees, VPSA Shepherd, Provost Tirrell, and President Rosenbaum,

In March, the Faculty's Standing Health Committee proposed substantial cuts to graduate student healthcare. These cuts were mentioned to students at the COVID-19 Town Hall on April 2nd and presented to the Faculty Board on April 6th. A graduate student representative also brought the proposed cuts to the attention of the graduate student body in order to get broader feedback from students with varying healthcare needs.

In response to the proposed cuts, numerous concerned grad students came together in order to better understand the impact that these cuts would have on our community. Because of the substantial concern and confusion about the situation within the graduate population, a group of students subsequently formed Caltech for Affordable Healthcare (CAH) to gather more information and organize concerns. In order to provide greater clarity, we invited the administration to a Healthcare town hall on April 14th. Unfortunately, no administrator was able to attend. After the town hall, attended by nearly 80 graduate students, CAH decided to put together a petition in order to clearly demonstrate the level of graduate concern, and put forward a set of proposals that represent a solution to the lack of graduate student input to the healthcare process, in the short and long term.

Caltech for Affordable Healthcare (CAH) has been working to gather as much feedback from graduate students as possible regarding their needs in a health insurance plan. We have compiled a summary of those needs into a petition, which we submit to you today. Please find the petition text, and a regularly updated list of signatories [here](#). Additionally, we have developed answers to some [frequently asked questions](#) regarding the petition and compiled individual [stories](#) about graduate student experiences with our healthcare.

In the five days since its release, this petition has already garnered support from 499 graduate students, 179 Caltech-affiliated supporters (including 89 postdoctoral scholars), and 23 campus organizations. The petition therefore reflects serious concerns of almost 40% of our graduate student body that are supported in earnest by our community.

We understand that the Caltech administration has been working tirelessly to develop plans to reopen campus and to ensure that the transition to online instruction goes smoothly. Because we do not currently understand the timeline of your decision on our health insurance, we have been operating using the deadline presented at the April 6th faculty board meeting, which was at the end of April. If there is a different timeline that we are unaware of, it is important for us to know. This would allow all of us more time to work together on gathering data and feedback from graduate students on healthcare costs, in order to make the best decision for the health and wellbeing of the graduate community.

We therefore request that you meet with us by May 11th, 2020 to discuss your plans to address these demands. In this way, we can ensure that the plan next year does not require students to make choices between their financial and physical/mental well being, and that the process going forward has a mechanism for graduate students to be involved in decisions about their health. In advance of this meeting we will continue collecting signatures for the petition and will keep the petition document linked above updated.

Looking forward to working with you on this important issue,  
Dawna Bagherian and Ollie Stephenson  
On behalf of Caltech for Affordable Healthcare