

Members of the court,

My name is Ashleigh Dunn and I live here in Waterville Maine. I am currently a student at The University of Maine in Orono majoring in social work. I am a junior and currently have \$16,000 in student loans. My plan is to continue my degree into receiving my master's degree. My end goal with receiving my degree is to open my own practice to provide different therapies to assist a wide variety of clients and impact multiple environments. I really would like to assist children, those affected by mental illness, and work with those who have suffered from trauma. I will be beginning my practicum this upcoming fall semester and will be doing it in a current place that I am employed, which is Goodwill Hinckley. I am looking forward to my practicum because I have done work most of my life that has led to me wanting to become a social worker, and the ability to do this at my current job is allowing me to get paid a small amount while I do my practicum. If I was not being paid for my practicum it would lead me to have trouble on continuing in my degree due to the rising costs of things and having to save money to pay off my student loans in the future. At my current job I am doing work as a behavioral health professional and Ed. Tech. What drew me to Goodwill Hinckley is they are working with children in foster care and who come from less than ideal homes. They provide education, behavior supports, supports for those who age out of the foster system, and family therapy to assist in reunification and assist in all the environments that could be impacting the children that we serve. I think the work of a social worker with families and children is important because often times trauma is multigenerational. With working with children we can give them the supports and coping skills to break this cycle and live a full and successful life.

I have been working in this field since I graduated high school which has led me to finding social work as a career I would like to pursue. Throughout my school career I have had to work 50-60 hours a week while going to school full time. I have not taken out as many loans as I have been offered due to the large amounts of cost and when I would have to begin paying this back. Having to work so much while attending school has made balancing life difficult. I have had to make many choices of things to give up because when I began my school career I was also raising my younger sister and having to provide for her as well. If I could have my loans forgiven this would be beneficial to me because I could begin my career in helping people and not have to have a focus on how I am going to begin to pay off this high amount that will rise with my goal to becoming an MSW and rise due to the rising interest rates which sit currently at 4.99%-7.54%. I think with being able to just focus on my job as a social worker would allow for me to be a stronger advocate and make a greater impact on the clients I would serve and the community.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ashleigh Dunn