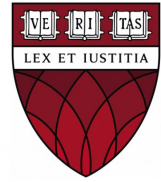




**HARVARD LAW SCHOOL
STUDENT BODY
SPRING TERM
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-TWO**



RESOLUTION NO. R.-205-004

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SUPPORTED BY: Faith Jackson

A RESOLUTION TO: REQUEST HLS ADMINISTRATION PROVIDE A MEANINGFUL UPDATE OR A TIMELINE FOR STUDENT SUMMER CONTRIBUTION POLICY CHANGES

THE STUDENT BODY OF HARVARD LAW SCHOOL ENACTS:

WHEREAS, in February 2021, students met with the Dean of Financial Aid to express concerns about Student Financial Services' summer contribution policy and the request reconsideration of the policy in favor of alternative financing options; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 2021, students continued their efforts to change Student Financial Services' summer contribution policy and met with administrators after one student's viral tweet and news coverage revealed the experience of low-income students who secured summer salaries from law firms; and

WHEREAS, this reinvigorated campaign of advocacy has included engaging with Dean of Financial Aid and crafting detailed and student-centered proposals for summer contribution reform; and

WHEREAS, generations of Harvard Law School students have advocated for the revocation or readjustment of this policy, and the narrative of the punitive outcome for students on financial aid has been reported on since February 2017 in an article by the Harvard Law Record; and

WHEREAS, HLS unfairly penalizes low-wealth students who choose to work at law firms during their summers by claiming as a "summer contribution" 90% of their income past a meager living stipend; and

WHEREAS, HLS insists on eliminating any opportunity low income students have to recoup some of the costs, even increasing the amount students have to contribute when firms provided additional compensation as a result of the movement around summer contribution and learning that students were not keeping their full income; and

WHEREAS, the summer contribution has the ability to impact admissions especially for the neediest students who current students may encourage to go elsewhere, especially given Yale's recent decision to cover full tuition for the neediest students and the fact that, as a result, HLS is now the only school that gives low-income students no opportunity for full-coverage, neither through merit nor adequate need aid; and

WHEREAS, many students have to take out additional loans to pay their summer contribution to HLS and low-wealth students are effectively prevented from reducing their loans, helping family that may be financially dependent, or covering expenses not included in financial aid like the costs of professional clothing; and

WHEREAS, low-wealth students are denied the autonomy to choose high-paying jobs to offset three years of lost income, oftentimes while being responsible for the expenses of oneself and multiple family members; and

WHEREAS, the Harvard Law School Student Government has facilitated conversation between students advocates on abolishing the contribution, and has been emailing the Dean of the Law School and Dean of Student Services on the topic since June 2021, yet has not received substantial updates on the administration's "progress" or decision-making process; and

WHEREAS, ten months have passed since student advocates met with HLS Administrators on the summer contribution, and while they claim to be "working hard" on the issue, they have not presented solutions nor explained further about the obstacles, trade-offs, or consequences of summer contribution alternatives; and

WHEREAS, the Assistant Dean for Student Financial Services directed students to a survey on the expenses students face after multiple low-wealth students had already provided valuable feedback, and while the survey covered topics like rent, it did not cover the hidden costs of law school including attending networking dinners, paying for the costs of grooming for interviews, traveling for interviews that may or may not be covered by an employer, and otherwise working to get opportunities that inspired many low-wealth students to attend HLS rather than institutions that may have been more affordable; and

WHEREAS, on March 8, 2022, the Dean of Student Services refused to allow Student Government to discuss summer contribution policy during a regularly scheduled meeting with the Dean of the Law School, saying that the issue was not "ripe" for discussion despite the protestations of both Student Body Co-Presidents; and

WHEREAS, the refusal to meet came only after Student Government shared the list of student advocates they were bringing to the meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Administration's support and willingness to listen to students appears only after student activism, or when responding to media press about the policy, with the Administration welcoming student activists in June 2021 after the viral tweet, but making little progress since; and

WHEREAS, summer contribution remains one of the top issues for students, who are concerned about the impact of the policy on their financial situation and deserve to know where the Administration is in the process of changing the policy; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Harvard Law School Student Government recognizes the summer contribution policy as it stands to be an unconscionable fee that harms all affected students, with a disproportionate impact on low-income students seeking to counterbalance the extreme expense of education at Harvard Law School; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Student Government requests the Dean of the Law School, Dean of Students office, and Student Financial Services committee to provide a formal and meaningful update on the summer contribution policy and provide insight into how the decision is being made; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Student Government requests the HLS Administration commit to a timeline and present to those interested or affected on what could happen and why the solutions look the way they do; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Student Government requests that the HLS Administration present this formal update and timeline in a written form before current student advocates graduate in May, and in a way that can be easily transmitted to the incoming generation of student leaders.

PASSED IN THE STUDENT COUNCIL: March 23, 2022

VOTE TOTALS:

13 YES

0 NO

0 ABSTAIN