



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 25, 2019

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Advocates and Borrowers Unite to Address the Student Loan Debt Crisis by Launching the “Free My Future: Student Loan Debt Week of Action”

NextGen California partners with Consumer Reports, Student Borrower Protection Center, Student Debt Crisis, Young Invincibles, and others for a Week of Action (December 2-7) to raise awareness of the student loan debt crisis, share free resources with borrowers that need immediate support, and advocate for stronger student loan borrower consumer protections in California.

Sacramento, CA - Today, NextGen California along with its partners announce the Free My Future Student Loan Debt Week of Action. From December 2-7, NextGen and its partners will raise awareness around the student debt crisis which impacts nearly 4 million Californians and urge the California State Legislature to take action and protect borrowers by passing AB 376 - The Student Borrower Bill of Rights.

Executive Director of NextGen California, Arnold Sowell Jr. said, “It’s no secret that student loan debt has reached crisis proportions in California and across the country. With 4 million Californians struggling to pay their student loans and total California student debt over \$141 billion, this crisis cannot be ignored. Every student borrower deserves an opportunity to achieve the promise that higher education offers and a future free from crippling amounts of student debt.”

NextGen California and its partners invite the public to participate in the Free My Future Student Loan Debt Week of Action (December 2-7). The Free My Future Summit offers: a resource fair, student debt workshops, one on one student debt counseling, and culminates with a comedy show headlining comedian Loni Love. Detailed event information can be found at www.nextgenpolicy.org/FreeMyFuture.

Free My Future Week of Action Events:

Monday, Dec. 2 – Tele-Town Hall - The Tele-Town Hall will be a chance for student loan borrowers, parents, teachers, and supporters to tune in and learn more about student loan issues and repayment options.

Wednesday, Dec. 4 – Assembly Select Committee on Student Debt Hearing - This informational hearing will be focused on “Student Debt Impacts on California’s Neighborhoods,” and will explore the negative societal effects of student debt on California’s cities, neighborhoods and communities.

Wednesday, Dec. 4 – Student Loan Debt Workshop - Attendees will learn about federal repayment options, how to apply for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, and receive one-on-one Q&A time with staff from Student Debt Crisis.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/student-loan-debt-workshop-tickets-82017930839>

Saturday, Dec. 7 – Free Student Loan Debt Summit - The Free My Future Summit is free and will include real-time resources from over 20 community partners and breakout sessions featuring expert leaders dedicated to empowering and equipping those negatively affected by student loan debt.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-my-future-student-loan-debt-summit-registration-81412377613>

California needs to act now and pave the way for student loan consumer protections:

Suzanne Martindale, Senior Policy Counsel & Western States Legislative Manager, [Consumer Reports](#): "Education debt can feel like a ball and chain for Californians struggling to pay off their loans. Too often, student loan servicers make that burden even heavier by mismanaging accounts and failing to help borrowers access more affordable repayment options. We need a Student Borrower Bill of Rights to ensure Californians are treated fairly and protected from abusive practices that can make loans more expensive and lead to default."

Seth Frotman, [Student Borrower Protection Center](#) Executive Director and former CFPB student loan ombudsman: "Borrowers and organizations representing students, workers, consumers, older Americans, communities of color and veterans are doubling down in the fight to protect borrowers and to pass the Student Borrower Bill of Rights. At the same time, we are seeing big banks and special interests with a history of ripping off borrowers, now working overtime to derail these critical protections. Californians struggling under the weight of student debt cannot afford to lose this fight. It's time for lawmakers to stand up for the more than 4 million California borrowers and pass this bill to give them the rights and protections they deserve."

Natalia Abrams, Executive Director, Executive Director of [Student Debt Crisis](#):

"We are working tirelessly to address the student debt crisis in California by passing a Student Borrower Bill of Rights to protect people from the industry abuse. Unfortunately, nearly four million Californians are carrying the burden of student loan debt and they cannot wait for legislators to act. That is why we are proud to join the nation's leading advocates in a

first-of-its-kind effort to inform people of their rights and to educate students, parents, and borrowers of vital resources."

Kristin McGuire, Western Regional Director for [Young Invincibles](#): The student debt crisis in California is at critical mass. While this burden impacts all borrowers, it creates a special hardship for Black, Latinx, and low-income student borrowers. We are proud of the work we are doing to help protect borrowers with The Student Borrower Bill of Rights and hope that legislators in Sacramento will stand with the 4 million borrowers in California who so desperately deserve these protections.

The California Student Borrower Bill of Rights

The Student Borrower Bill of Rights (AB 376) was authored by Assemblymember Mark Stone (D-Santa Cruz), and is co-sponsored by NextGen California ([nextgenpolicy.org](#)), the Student Borrower Protection Center ([protectborrowers.org](#)), Consumer Reports Advocacy ([advocacy.consumerreports.org](#)), Student Debt Crisis ([studentdebtcrisis.org](#)), and Young Invincibles ([younginvincibles.org](#)).

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NextGen California is a non-profit organization dedicated to working on legislative, budgetary, regulatory, and programmatic issues. Originally founded in 2014 to focus on climate and environmental policy, in recent years, NextGen California has broadened its scope to advance solutions to various economic, and social justice issues. Specifically, our policy portfolio now encompasses topics such as: criminal justice and immigration; healthcare and food insecurity; mental health and voting rights; student loan debt and the Census; veterans issues and consumer protections; and affordable housing and environmental justice.

Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit membership organization that works side by side with consumers to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world. For 80 years, CR has provided evidence-based product testing and ratings, rigorous research, hard-hitting investigative journalism, public education, and steadfast policy action on behalf of consumers' interests. Unconstrained by advertising or other commercial influences, CR has exposed landmark public health and safety issues and strives to be a catalyst for pro-consumer changes in the marketplace. From championing responsible auto safety standards, to winning food and water protections, to enhancing healthcare quality, to fighting back against predatory lenders in the financial markets, Consumer Reports has always been on the front lines, raising the voices of consumers.

The Student Borrower Protection Center is a nonprofit organization focused on alleviating the burden of student debt for millions of Americans. SBPC engages in advocacy, policymaking, and litigation strategy to rein in industry abuses, protect borrowers' rights, and advance

economic opportunity for the next generation of students. Led by the team of former federal regulators that directed oversight of the student loan market at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, SBPC exposes harmful and illegal practices in the student loan industry, drives impact litigation, advocates on behalf of student loan borrowers in Washington and in state capitals, and promotes progressive policy change. SBPC accomplishes these goals by partnering with leaders at all levels of government and throughout the nonprofit sector.

Student Debt Crisis is a non-profit (501c4) organization dedicated to fundamentally reforming student debt and higher education loan policies. Student Debt Crisis (SDC) takes a personal approach to member needs—working directly with borrowers to understand their challenges and fears, repayment obstacles and frustrations. SDC tackles the challenges of loan refinancing and consumer protection policies with media and legislators, as well as educating borrowers and higher education experts with lectures, webinars and special events.

Young Invincibles (YI) is a national nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy and research organization working with and for young adults to address the generation's most pressing economic challenges by amplifying the voices of young adults in the political process. With a focus on higher education, health care, workforce development, and civic engagement, our work is guided by the belief that every young person - regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, or any other factor - deserves a fair chance to achieve their goals and reach financial stability.