



President Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Young people are eager for a change in our country. That's why [61 percent](#) of people 18 to 29 voted to make the Biden-Harris administration a reality, an overwhelming majority of whom were people of color. Your administration has pledged to “build back better” by focusing on “a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.”

Pay Our Interns and Next100 are both organizations that work to make our government and policies fair, democratic, and responsive by working to expand and diversify pathways into public policy roles. We believe government at every level must better reflect the communities it is looking to serve. **To show a concrete step towards building a more diverse government, we respectfully request your administration include funds for every federal agency and the White House to have paid internships as part of the President's Budget Request.** We believe internships are a critical pathway into government roles and positions of policy power. Yet too often, unpaid internships replicate existing societal inequities, instead of opening doors to diverse individuals and communities. If implemented equitably, paid internships at the federal level could begin to address the historic lack of diversity across agencies. At Pay Our Interns and Next100, we are eager to work with your administration on this issue, as we have worked with Members of Congress to expand paid internships in the legislative branch and continue to work to expand diversity in the broader policy sector.

The good news is that Congress has already demonstrated a growing interest in providing funding for paid internships. In 2017, 10 percent of Congress paid its interns; [today over 90 percent of offices use their congressional internship fund allowances](#) to pay interns. Pay Our Interns has helped secure \$48 million toward paid internships on Capitol Hill, allowing over 10,000 young people to intern and get paid. We've recently partnered with Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Tim Scott (R-SC), and Rep. Joaquin Castro (TX-20) on a bill that would [get State Department interns paid](#). Additionally, in 2017, Congress created the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, which released a report last year [recommending](#) all federal government interns be paid to “expand the socioeconomic diversity of interested applicants and interns and improve competitiveness with private-sector internships.”

Providing funding for federal agencies to implement and expand paid internship opportunities would meet the moment and accomplish the Administration's [whole-of-government equity agenda](#) by:

- Removing socioeconomic barriers to entry at federal agencies by “[affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity](#).”
- Meeting the goal of the [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) by reducing the costs incurred by students who choose public service internships.



Next  
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- Addressing the short-term goal of diversifying the federal government while preventing long-term staff pipeline issues, since [less than 8 percent of federal agency employees are under 30](#).
- Creating jobs for the nearly [3.5 million people under 30](#) who remain unemployed despite over \$4 trillion being invested in softening the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Securing the future of over [4 million students](#) completing their degrees, since those who enter the labor market during a recession can experience [a decade of decreased earnings](#).

Unpaid internships effectively rig the lowest levels of our economy against the millions of young people who have real financial obligations, cutting them off from a pathway to success before they leave college. Too often, these opportunities exclude young people of color, setting nearly every industry on a pathway to diminished racial and economic inclusion. **This is harmful in every industry, and unacceptable in public service.**

Black and Hispanic people have [sustained the highest unemployment rates](#) throughout the pandemic and would benefit most from the creation of paid internships. Black and Hispanic families are more likely to face food insecurity. Overall, this means young people of color face more pressure than ever to provide for their families. Creating more paid internship opportunities would allow young people of color to advance their careers in public service with field-specific experience, while meeting their financial obligations.

We recommend beginning with funding requests for the following agencies, given how deeply their missions align with expanding opportunity and equity:

- Office of Administration, Executive Office of the President, to compensate those in the White House Internship Program;
- Department of Education, to aid schools in [“\[addressing\] the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of their students”](#);
- Department of Labor, to meet the continued need for and administration of unemployment benefits;
- Department of Agriculture, to address the needs of rural communities, such as increased access to telehealth and telecommunications infrastructure;
- Department of Interior, which oversees the National Park Service, and would allow for completion of a backlog of public works projects;
- Department of State, for which, as noted above, Rep. Castro (TX-20) and Sens. Booker and Scott already have a bill to pay, house, and provide travel assistance to interns in order to create equitable access to career pathways in foreign policy;
- Department of Housing and Urban Development, to address housing insecurities exacerbated by the pandemic; and
- Corporation for National and Community Service, to focus existing programs like AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA on equity, and make national service more accessible, inclusive, and diverse.

Thank you for the consideration of this request. We look forward to working with your Administration to create and equitably implement paid internship opportunities across federal agencies, and build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive government that empowers the young people and communities it serves.

Sincerely,



CC: The Honorable Shalanda Young, Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget  
The Honorable Kathleen McGettigan, Acting Director of the Office of Personnel Management  
The Honorable Anne Filipic, Director of White House Office of Management & Administration  
The Honorable Ambassador Susan Rice, Director of the Domestic Policy Council  
The Honorable Miguel Cardona, Secretary of Education  
The Honorable Marty Walsh, Secretary of Labor  
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture  
The Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior  
The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State  
The Honorable Marcia Fudge, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development  
The Honorable Malcolm Coles, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service