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ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL OPPOSES FEDERAL RULE TO END THE RIGHT OF STUDENT WORKERS TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul, as part of a coalition of 13 attorneys general, today called on the federal government to withdraw a proposed rule that would deny student teachers and research assistants at private colleges the right to organize and bargain collectively.

The rule, proposed by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), would exclude student workers from the definition of “employee” under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), and thereby deprive them of the NLRA’s protections for labor organizing and collective bargaining.

“For many student workers struggling to make ends meet while balancing teaching and research duties with their own coursework and commitments, the ability to organize and bargain collectively is essential to securing decent pay and living conditions,” Raoul said. “I urge the NLRB to withdraw the proposed rule.”

In [the comments](#), Raoul and the coalition argue that this rule could lead to an exhausted and underpaid student workforce and deter students from pursuing academic careers. This could also harm businesses, nonprofits, and governmental institutions that depend on student workers for teaching and research. The attorneys general also state that the proposed rule oversteps the NLRB’s statutory reach, infringes on the legislative authority of Congress, and is contrary to the NLRA.

Graduate student assistants handle a significant amount of the teaching work at private colleges and universities. The proposed rule would reverse a 2016 NLRB ruling that student workers are employees under the NLRA, and are therefore able to organize into unions and bargain collectively. Student workers at public colleges and universities have been bargaining collectively with the institutions that employ them since the late 1960s.

While the NLRB claims that collective bargaining by student workers is a threat to the discretion of private institutions to decide such things as course content, student body composition, and graduation standards, Raoul and the coalition argue that this argument is unsupported by the history of collective bargaining at public colleges and universities, which shows student workers have typically focused on such traditional labor issues as wages, working conditions, leave time and employee benefits.

Joining Raoul in the comments are the attorneys general of Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.