SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ET AL.,) Petitioners,) v.) No. 22-535 MYRA BROWN, ET AL.,) Respondents.)

Pages: 1 through 89
Place: Washington, D.C.
Date: February 28, 2023

HERITAGE REPORTING CORPORATION

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1 IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES 2 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ 3 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ET AL.,) Petitioners,) 4 5) No. 22-535 v. 6 MYRA BROWN, ET AL.,) 7 Respondents.) - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -8 9 10 Washington, D.C. 11 Tuesday, February 28, 2023 12 13 The above-entitled matter came on for oral 14 argument before the Supreme Court of the United 15 States at 12:21 p.m. 16 17 **APPEARANCES:** GEN. ELIZABETH B. PRELOGAR, Solicitor General, 18 19 Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on behalf 20 of the Petitioners. J. MICHAEL CONNOLLY, ESQUIRE, Arlington, Virginia; on 21 22 behalf of the Respondents. 23 24 25

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1 PROCEEDINGS 2 (12:21 p.m.) 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear argument, we'll continue argument, in Case 4 5 22-535, Department of Education versus Brown. Welcome back. 6 7 ORAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. ELIZABETH B. PRELOGAR ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS 8 9 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court: 10 11 Across the board, Brown and Taylor's 12 arguments in this case run counter to precedent and principle. On standing, Respondents' 13 14 asserted injury is a complete mismatch for the 15 relief they seek. They claim to want greater 16 loan forgiveness than the plan provides, but 17 they ask this Court to hold that the HEROES Act 18 doesn't authorize loan forgiveness at all. 19 A win on that theory would mean that 20 no one could get any HEROES Act relief, not 21 Brown, who would get nothing for herself, not 2.2 Taylor, who would lose \$10,000, and not any of 23 the millions of borrowers who need this critical 24 relief. Respondents lack standing to seek that 25 result. Parties cannot go to court to make

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1 themselves and everyone else worse off. 2 To get around that problem, Brown and Taylor gesture at the idea that if the Secretary 3 can't act under the HEROES Act, he might 4 consider making an entirely different decision 5 6 to grant debt relief under the Education Act. 7 But, on the merits, Respondents are broadly attacking the whole idea of providing 8 9 loan forgiveness under any executive action. 10 They never explain why they think the Secretary 11 could provide broader relief to even more 12 borrowers under the Education Act. And, in any event, this Court has 13 never endorsed that kind of circuitous route to 14 15 standing. A plaintiff who isn't injured by 16 agency action can't establish standing by 17 speculating that invalidating that -- that 18 action might prompt the agency to take an 19 entirely different action under a different 20 statute. 21 If the Court reaches the merits, it 2.2 should reject Respondents' claim. They argue 23 the plan is unlawful because the Secretary 24 didn't use certain rulemaking procedures. But 25 Congress specifically exempted the Secretary

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1 from following those procedures when he issues 2 waivers and modifications under the HEROES Act. Respondents' procedural claim fails in light of 3 that clear statutory exemption. 4 I welcome the Court's questions. 5 JUSTICE THOMAS: Are there any 6 7 instances in which you would have procedural standing? 8 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think that if 9 10 they wanted to argue that the Secretary should 11 have reconsidered his decision under the HEROES 12 Act to grant broader relief, then it's possible that they could have raised both a procedural 13 14 claim and a substantive claim because, at that 15 point, their injury would be redressable. They 16 would be saying that the Secretary drew 17 arbitrary lines, that the plan should be 18 expanded to include them and to provide relief 19 to them, and that would be a very 20 straightforward route to making the arguments if 21 what they really want is loan forgiveness. 2.2 But, instead, their whole argument 23 here is that the Secretary can't give them or anyone else relief under the HEROES Act. And 24 25 when you look at it that way, there is no case

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that we've been able to find, and we've really 1 2 tried to boil the oceans here, that could plausibly support that theory of procedural 3 4 injury. It would blow open the doors to 5 6 asserting Article III injury when you are not 7 directly affected by an agency action and, by 8 your own lights, you can't stand to benefit from 9 any ruling on that agency action merely because you think that if you can block it, you could --10 11 the -- the agency might reach out and look for 12 some other source of authority to regulate and 13 make a new action. 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The -- this action 15 has nothing to do with their right if they 16 thought it was permissible to seek relief under 17 the Education Act, correct? 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct. 19 It's a --20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: They could --GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- it's a totally 21 2.2 different source of authority. If they want 23 relief under the Education Act, there are 24 provisions where they can file a petition for 25 rulemaking and ask for that relief right now.

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1	And it's not as though these are mutually
2	exclusive sources of authority. The Education
3	Act is is not directed to national
4	emergencies. It's not it's an independent
5	source of authority here, unlike the HEROES Act,
6	which is the action they're challenging that's
7	specifically focused on this agency this
8	national emergency situation.
9	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I understand
10	your argument on standing, and I I know this
11	isn't directly on point, but, when I saw it,
12	it's sort of like the equal protection cases,
13	you know, where discrimination between men and
14	women on the the level of pensions and the
15	women widows get more and the widowers get
16	less, and the challenge is brought and the
17	argument was, well, if you win, we're going to
18	take the excess away from the the widows, so
19	you're not going to get anything, so you don't
20	have standing.
21	Why is that case I appreciate the
22	way in which it's different, but why isn't that
23	at least some authority on which they can rely?
24	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I I think that
25	the equal protection cases are fundamentally

1 different because, there, your injury is your 2 complaint of unequal treatment. And so, whether 3 you level up or level down, your injury is being redressed. You're no longer being subject to 4 unequal treatment, and, instead, everyone is 5 6 being subject to the same treatment. 7 But this case stands in a very 8 different posture because, here, their argument 9 is our injury is we're not getting loan 10 forgiveness, and the -- the relief they're 11 seeking, which is a declaration that the HEROES 12 Act doesn't authorize loan forgiveness in the first place, doesn't redress that injury one 13 14 bit. 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right, but 16 it's -- it's --17 GENERAL PRELOGAR: It just carves it 18 into stone. 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right. But, I 20 mean, without looking after the case, yes, you could lower it or -- or raise it, but that's an 21 2.2 uncertainty that had -- that we did not -- we 23 decided that that did not affect their right to 24 bring the action because it may be changed in a 25 particular way.

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And I suppose their argument would be that, you know, they are injured by not being -participating in the program, and if the program is struck down in its current form, it may be changed in a particular way that would help them.

7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think that there is, though, a complete disconnect between 8 the claim of injury. And it's true that in the 9 equal protection context, you don't know ex ante 10 11 what the remedy is going to be. But the Court 12 has determined that doesn't affect standing because, either way, no matter what remedy 13 14 occurs, based on the equal protection injury, 15 it's going to fix the nature of the harm of 16 providing unequal treatment.

And, here, the -- the only certainty 17 18 is that if they prevail on their claims, it's 19 going to make it harder to provide them or anyone else with debt relief. Their suggestion 20 21 here that the Secretary wholly lacks this 2.2 authority under the HEROES Act and their 23 assertion of arguments to support that claim 24 that broadly attack this whole concept of loan 25 forgiveness, I think, demonstrate that we're far

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1	afield from the equal protection case law.
2	JUSTICE JACKSON: Can I just ask you,
3	I I had understood them to be complaining
4	about the procedures. Am I completely off base
5	here? Are you suggesting that they are
6	complaining about not getting enough loan
7	forgiveness or something? Maybe I misheard you,
8	but I thought they were trying to bring a
9	procedural claim in that the reason why this was
10	problematic was because the procedures that they
11	are saying are lacking are actually under the
12	other source of authority, that they that if
13	we looked at the source of authority that the
14	Secretary used in this scenario, it doesn't
15	guarantee them those procedures, so you can't
16	really complain about not getting procedures in
17	another under another statute that was not
18	invoked in in this situation.
19	Am I wrong about this?
20	GENERAL PRELOGAR: No. And I
21	understand the confusion because
22	JUSTICE JACKSON: Okay.
23	GENERAL PRELOGAR: the the
24	the theory here is a little convoluted, and so
25	let me try to unpack it. They are asserting a

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1 procedural injury, but what they're saying is we 2 want an opportunity to comment on loan 3 forgiveness so it'll include us as well. Our underlying injury is that, without having a 4 chance to comment on the Secretary's use of 5 authority under the HEROES Act, we didn't get a 6 7 chance to advocate for us to be included in the 8 plan. 9 The problem with that procedural

10 theory of harm is that by their own arguments in 11 the case, the Secretary couldn't make a 12 different decision. He couldn't go back to the 13 drawing board and think about it and decide, 14 yes, I'm going to expand the plan under the 15 HEROES Act to provide these borrowers with 16 relief too. So they aren't able to assert that 17 kind of redressability for an asserted 18 procedural injury under the HEROES Act. 19 JUSTICE JACKSON: And that's because 20 there aren't negotiated procedures under the 21 HEROES Act? 2.2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Right. The statutory text is very clear. So, even if you 23 24 were to get to it on the merits, they haven't 25 actually been deprived of any procedural rights.

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1 The HEROES Act specifies that waivers and 2 modifications issued under the HEROES Act are 3 exempt from notice-and-comment. But I think because of the fundamental 4 flaw with their theory of injury and the fact 5 that it couldn't be redressed by their own 6 7 arguments in this case, they've now brought up this Education Act idea. 8 They haven't been deprived of any 9 procedural rights under the Education Act. You 10 11 know, procedural rights derive from specific 12 agency decisions under agency authority. So 13 it's not as though they have some procedural 14 right in the ether to just comment on the 15 concept of loan forgiveness writ large. 16 Instead, under the HEROES Act, as we've just discussed, there isn't a 17 18 notice-and-comment procedural right, and under 19 the Education Act, no decision has been made. And so they haven't been deprived of any 20 procedure associated --21 2.2 JUSTICE JACKSON: And so what they 23 would --GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- with that 24 25 decision-making.

1	JUSTICE JACKSON: so what they
2	would need, I suppose, is certainty that if they
3	if we if we nullify the authority of the
4	Secretary to do what it did in the HEROES Act,
5	that there would necessarily be a loan
6	forgiveness program under the HEA?
7	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. And they
8	can't make anything like that showing here.
9	JUSTICE JACKSON: Right.
10	GENERAL PRELOGAR: It's total
11	speculation on their part to suggest that if the
12	Secretary is blocked from taking this action,
13	maybe he'll look for a different source of
14	authority and issue an entirely different
15	program under that source of authority. And I
16	think that that shows that their their theory
17	is unduly speculative here.
18	I think it's important to recognize as
19	well why they're pressing this claim and the
20	upshot of this theory. The reason they're
21	asking the Court to go down this road is so that
22	they can effectively raise a substantive
23	challenge to the HEROES Act.
24	That was actually the only claim on
25	which they prevailed below. The district court

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1 in this case rejected their assertions of 2 procedural harm and instead went on to resolve a 3 standalone substantive challenge to the Secretary's plan and said that it was unlawful 4 under the HEROES Act. 5 6 But they've now entirely abandoned 7 that basis for prevailing below. They say that the district court was wrong to consider that. 8 9 They're not defending that ruling. 10 And it makes good sense because they 11 obviously lack standing to maintain a 12 substantive standalone challenge to the HEROES Act since that wouldn't do anything to redress 13 14 their harm but instead just ensure that they 15 aren't going to get any debt relief. 16 By raising this procedural argument, 17 though, they're effectively asking for an 18 opportunity to raise the very same substantive 19 claim that they lack standing to pursue through 20 the guise of a procedural challenge to the Act. 21 And there is no apparent reason for 2.2 the Court to allow that kind of gambit and to 23 take what is actually a substantive challenge 24 based on a generalized grievance with how the 25 executive is administering the law and alter the

1 ordinary Article III standards to allow a 2 plaintiff to revisit that conclusion through a 3 procedural mechanism. 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: General, I -- I appreciate your standing arguments and they've 5 6 been laid out very clearly here. 7 An interesting feature of this particular case is -- as you well know, is that 8 the Court entered a universal decree. We --9 we've chatted about this in prior cases. 10 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: We have indeed, 12 Justice Gorsuch. 13 JUSTICE GORSUCH: And I -- I -- I just 14 wanted to give you another chance to talk about 15 universal vacatur with some of my friends here 16 _ _ 17 (Laughter.) 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- if you want it. 19 And if you don't, that's fine. 20 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I will always take 21 that opportunity. 2.2 We did argue below that the district 23 court didn't have authority to enter universal vacatur in this case. And, you know, the -- the 24 25 language that courts have relied upon in

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1 thinking that this is a permissible remedy under 2 the APA --JUSTICE GORSUCH: For -- for -- for --3 for -- for a handful of plaintiffs. 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes, yes, for --5 for two individual borrowers is the set-aside 6 7 language. But, as we've explained, that 8 9 language, which comes from Section 706 of the 10 APA, if you look back and trace through what 11 Congress was doing when it enacted the APA was 12 not meant to be the remedial provision of the 13 APA. 14 Instead, that comes from Section 703, 15 which tells you to either look at a special 16 statutory review provision if one exists, and 17 sometimes there are special statutory review 18 provisions that say you can operate directly on 19 the agency action at issue. 20 But, in the absence of that, then it's the traditional equitable remedies that predated 21 22 the APA, and there was nothing like this 23 universal vacatur remedy then, which would take 24 you far beyond party-specific relief. 25 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I mean, talk about

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ways in which courts can interfere with the
 processes of government through two individuals
 in one state who don't like the program can seek
 and obtain a universal relief barring it for
 anybody anywhere.

6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's right, for 7 millions of Americans they've been able on the 8 basis of this claim to hold up that critical 9 relief.

10 JUSTICE JACKSON: But, of course, if 11 they actually had standing to do that, then, you 12 know, they could bring such a claim, and I guess 13 your position, which is not in this case because 14 we don't have a question presented about 15 universal -- vacatur, but your position is that, 16 what, the Court doesn't have the ability to 17 issue an injunction that would prevent this plan 18 from operating just because it was two people who brought the claim originally? 19

20 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, to be clear, 21 we're not suggesting that injunctions would be 22 off the table, but those too would have to be 23 targeted to party-specific relief. This idea --24 JUSTICE JACKSON: And how would it be 25 -- how would it be targeted in a -- in a plan

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1 such as this? 2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So, for example, 3 if, in fact, they had standing to pursue a procedural right, then the Secretary would be 4 5 enjoined to provide them the process that's due and to take into account their views in 6 7 determining whether to expand eligibility under 8 the program. 9 JUSTICE JACKSON: And would you have 10 the --11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: But nothing about 12 that, Justice Jackson --13 JUSTICE JACKSON: Yes. 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- would in any way 15 call into question whether other people should 16 get this right. 17 JUSTICE JACKSON: I understand. But, 18 if -- would you have the same reaction to 19 universal vacatur if the claim on the table was 20 about their particular entitlement to getting, 21 let's say, more money under this plan? 2.2 Would you -- would -- would we be in a 23 world if you were right about universal vacatur 24 in which every single borrower in the country 25 would have to bring a lawsuit in order to

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1 vindicate a right that the Court would say these 2 two people have? 3 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think, in a situation, it depends a little bit on which 4 court you're talking about. 5 6 Obviously, this Court has the 7 authority to resolve issues like that for the entire nation. So, if a -- if a question makes 8 its way to this Court, then it wouldn't be 9 10 necessary to have follow-on suits. 11 In the absence of that, then, yes, our 12 argument is you should provide party-specific relief, that the -- the traditional concepts of 13 14 remedial authority under Article III were 15 limited in that way and that to instead allow 16 single district courts throughout the nation to 17 claim the power to put a critical policy on hold 18 is out of accord with --19 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: So think of --JUSTICE KAGAN: I recall that the last 20 time we did this every member of the D.C. 21 2.2 Circuit --23 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah, this is 24 going to take a while. 25 (Laughter.)

1	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: We can go into
2	this, but
3	JUSTICE KAGAN: So so I'm just
4	going to change the subject if that's okay.
5	JUSTICE GORSUCH: General, I'm sorry.
6	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Actually, I
7	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I'm relieved,
8	Justice Kagan. Thank you.
9	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: No, I have a
10	question.
11	JUSTICE KAGAN: Of course, there are
12	many former
13	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I'm going to go
14	back.
15	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Sometimes I
16	need a gavel.
17	JUSTICE KAGAN: many former members
18	of the D.C. Circuit. I'd like to
19	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: I'm going back to
20	it.
21	JUSTICE KAGAN: Okay. I'd like to
22	hear about the merits of this case. I want to
23	come back to some of the claims that both sets
24	of Respondents here have in common dealing with
25	what we've called the arbitrary and capricious

aspects of the case. 1 2 And, as I understand it, the 3 memorandum really talks about two things. Tt. talks about forbearance and it talks about sort 4 of economics/COVID conditions, forbearance as a 5 6 kind of separate thing that people who have been 7 granted forbearance for long periods of time are more likely to go into default or become 8 9 delinquent in their payments. 10 And I guess I wonder, is that about 11 COVID, or is that just about something that 12 happens when you excuse loan payments for a long period of time and how it is that that gets to 13 14 be converted into an emergency COVID rationale? 15 And then, on the economic 16 considerations, and I think it was Justice 17 Barrett who talked about this a little, it 18 seems, you know, a real mixture of COVID and 19 non-COVID-related things. 20 And, of course, this is how the economy works, that COVID interacts with other 21 2.2 features of the economy to produce certain 23 economic conditions, but, again, I'm wondering 24 whether, you know, there was more of an 25 obligation on the part of the Secretary to

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1 isolate how COVID was affecting these borrowers? 2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Of course. And I'll take each of those considerations in turn. 3 I'll start with your questions about 4 forbearance, and I want to be really clear 5 because I think my friends have confused the 6 7 issue about this a little bit, that the Secretary wasn't finding that forbearance itself 8 had caused the economic harm to borrowers or 9 10 that it was the root cause of why they needed 11 additional relief. 12 Instead, the Secretary analyzed the 13 historical data regarding forbearance as a data 14 point in -- in understanding that forbearance is 15 not always a complete solution to the underlying 16 economic harm caused by the national emergency. 17 So, here, there's no doubt that 18 forbearance has provided very powerful and 19 critical support to borrowers over the life of 20 the COVID pandemic, but the Secretary found that once forbearance policy lifts, millions and 21 2.2 millions of borrowers are going to be worse off 23 with respect to their ability to pay because of 24 COVID.

25 The forbearance policy hasn't fixed

1 the underlying economic harm of the -- of the 2 pandemic and the emergency. So, to the extent that there's a bootstrapping concern here, I 3 just want to push back forcefully on that. I 4 think that the Secretary's decision memoranda 5 makes clear that sometimes additional relief is 6 7 necessary not because of forbearance but in spite of forbearance. 8

9 To turn to your question about the various causes or influences of economic harm 10 11 here, it's, of course, true that I can't make a 12 representation that the harms that borrowers are 13 facing are solely due to COVID-19. But I think 14 that it would be an impossible burden to place 15 on the Secretary to suggest that he needs to 16 isolate and identify just one economic factor or 17 force that's causing that kind of distress for 18 borrowers.

You know, our -- our economy is very complex and there are often multiple factors and forces at play, but the Secretary here found, and I don't think that anyone could reasonably dispute, that but for COVID, borrowers would not be in this situation of facing severe financial harms and the very real risk that they'll have

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1 to go into default or delinguency when they start repaying their student loans. 2 3 So I think, to the extent that there's concern here about how the standard could 4 operate, at the very least, the Secretary made 5 6 the requisite findings that these are financial 7 harms that derive directly from and are a but-for result of the COVID pandemic. 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, I'm 9 10 -- I'm sure I'm misreading the graphs on -- I'm looking at 247, 248. Didn't half the borrowers 11 12 say they would not have any trouble paying their loans without regard to the forgiveness program? 13 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So it varies based 15 on income bracket, and, yes, it's true that --16 that in certain income brackets, the data I 17 think reflected that, you know, 51 percent of borrowers expected that they would be unable to 18 19 pay their student loans. That wasn't the only 20 -- the only data the Secretary consulted, In those same studies that he 21 though. 2.2 referenced, there was general data about levels 23 of financial insecurity, and overwhelming 24 majorities of borrowers expressed huge financial 25 insecurity concerns about their ability to make

25

1	ends meet going 10 years into the future.
2	And I think one of the important
3	things to recognize, again, as I had mentioned
4	in the last argument, is that it's not necessary
5	for the Secretary to make a finding that each
б	and every borrower who receives relief under
7	this plan would have necessarily gone into
8	default or delinquency without it. That would
9	
10	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, of course
11	not, but, I mean, it does kind of factor into
12	the consideration, particularly in a situation
13	where you don't have notice-and-comment
14	proceedings, that maybe, again, that's something
15	that a broader representation of national
16	interests in Congress would take into account,
17	rather than what the the Secretary in a
18	particular case, who's weighing a lot of options
19	and considerations as well, would take into
20	account.
21	I mean, if more than half the people
22	say they don't need this relief, extending
23	relief to that breadth certainly raises
24	questions.
25	GENERAL PRELOGAR: So let me be clear

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1 that I think there is an avenue to address those 2 kinds of questions with overbreadth. I don't 3 think that it's a function of statutory interpretation, though. That would be 4 applications of the statute to particular fact 5 patterns and whether the Secretary could justify 6 7 the lines he drew and the level of relief he 8 decided was necessary.

9 And, here, Secretary -- Secretary 10 Cardona explained that huge numbers of borrowers 11 were going to go into default and delinquency, 12 and it's not as though he could easily segregate 13 and say here are the 50 percent where I know for 14 sure it will happen and here are the 50 percent 15 where it won't. If -- if he could make that 16 kind of determination, it might provide a basis 17 to determine that he should have drawn different 18 lines, but we don't have anything like that 19 here.

And I would just point again to the forbearance policy. You know, that has applied across the board to every single student-loan borrower with a federally held loan for the past three years. But I think that both Secretaries acted entirely within the domain of the HEROES

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1 Act in recognizing that that kind of broad class-wide relief was necessary due to the 2 3 particular exigencies of this emergency. 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you. Since we're dealing in -- in a -- in a 5 case with individual borrowers or would-be 6 7 borrowers, I -- I think it appropriate to consider some of the fairness arguments. You 8 9 know, you have two situations, both two kids 10 come out of high school, they can't afford 11 college, one takes a loan, and the other says, 12 well, I'm going to, you know, try my hand at setting up a lawn care service, and he takes out 13 14 a bank loan for that. 15 At the end of four years, we know 16 statistically that the person with the college 17 degree is going to do significantly financially

18 better over the course of life than the person 19 without.

And then along comes the government and tells that person: You don't have to pay your loan. Nobody's telling the person who is trying to set up the lawn service business that he doesn't have to pay his loan. He still does, even though his tax dollars are going to support

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1 the forgiveness of the loan for the -- the 2 college graduate, who's now going to make a lot 3 more than him over the course of his lifetime. Now it seems to me you may have views 4 on fairness of that and they don't count. I may 5 have views on the fairness of that and mine 6 7 don't count. We like to usually leave situations of that sort, when you're talking 8 9 about spending the government's money, which is the taxpayers' money, to the people in charge of 10 11 the money, which is Congress. 12 Now why isn't that a factor that should enter into our consideration under the 13 14 major questions doctrine again, where we look at 15 things a little more strictly than we might 16 otherwise when we're talking about statutory 17 grants of authority, to make sure that this is 18 something that Congress would have contemplated? 19 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So my reaction to that, Mr. Chief Justice, is that Congress did 20 take those kinds of considerations into account 21 2.2 in specifically providing this authority to the 23 Secretary. I think that the same kinds of 24 arguments about fairness or --25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it's

just circular. You're -- you're -- you know, it sort of, you know, begs the question to say that for -- I don't see any evidence that they took -- the -- the -- the -- the person who is trying to start the lawn service because he can't afford college, I don't see any evidence that they took him into account.

GENERAL PRELOGAR: But, if that's what 8 Congress would need to take into account and 9 10 show, then it can't legislate, it can't provide 11 the executive with preauthorization to take 12 action into an emergency. Congress can't look ahead to the future and say, okay, in the year 13 14 2020, when an unprecedented global pandemic 15 hits, we've decided that the lawn care 16 professional should, you know, not benefit from 17 this program, but the student-loan borrower 18 should.

19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So, and yet, 20 you're relying on -- on -- you're relying on an 21 interpretation of the statutory authority to say 22 that that's implementing Congress's intent to do 23 that. In a pandemic that they couldn't have 24 foreseen, we do think, no, they would have 25 foreseen the idea when they said "modify or

30

1 waive," that that would mean waiving the whole liability for 40 million Americans at a cost of 2 3 half a trillion dollars, they've foreseen -that they foresaw that enough to allow the 4 Secretary to act without any express 5 6 congressional authority, any more express 7 congressional authority than the authority you 8 rely on. GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, let me break 9 10 it apart into two different components because I

11 think there's a first-order question of whether 12 Congress could have foreseen the possibility of 13 debt discharge at all.

14 And I think the answer to that has to 15 be yes. That was a well-established form of 16 relief that you can provide to borrowers in --17 in hardship situations, as I previously 18 mentioned, it's one of the core provisions in the -- Title IV, and Congress, in specifically 19 20 enacting a statute that's aimed at this problem 21 of not leaving borrowers worse off in reaction 2.2 to a national emergency, clearly understood that using this broad language --23

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So we're just
25 going --

1 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, so that's the 2 first-order question. 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm not -- I'm 4 not --GENERAL PRELOGAR: Now, I recognize --5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- I'm not --6 7 I'm not faulting you for repeating your answer 8 since I think I probably repeated my question, 9 but you're just saying -- you know, it's the 10 same argument about what "modify and waive" 11 means. 12 GENERAL PRELOGAR: It is as a 13 statutory matter on the categorical argument 14 about debt discharge. 15 Now you have asked me several 16 questions about the scope of this program, and 17 -- and let me try to be responsive to that. I recognize that this is a big program, but that's 18 19 in direct reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, 20 which itself was a really big problem. There 21 hasn't been a national emergency like this in 2.2 the time that the HEROES Act has been on the 23 books that's affected this many borrowers. 24 And so I think it's not surprising to 25 see in response to this once-in-a-century

pandemic the kind of relief that the Secretaries have offered here, the forbearance policy that has itself cost \$150 billion and now this loan forgiveness program. To the extent that you have concerns about the scope and size of the program, though, I would say that if I can get you to agree with

8 me, and maybe I can't, on this point that the 9 categorical debt discharge argument doesn't work 10 as a statutory matter, then I think the right 11 place to look to house those concerns is in 12 arbitrary and capricious review.

We think here that the Secretary drew reasonable lines in crafting the scope of relief, but if you disagree or if you think he should have taken different interests into account, that would be a basis to reverse him on arbitrary and capricious grounds, not to distort the plain meaning of the HEROES Act.

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you.

21 Justice Thomas?

22 Justice Alito?

JUSTICE ALITO: Well, the -- the
Secretary did what he did, so, presumably, he
had and has a view about the fairness question

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1 that the Chief Justice posed to you. What is that view? 2 3 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So the Secretary understood the statutory authority and mandate 4 here to focus on whether this national emergency 5 6 was going to leave borrowers worse off because 7 of the pandemic. This is Congress deciding that the government should be in a position to 8 provide benefits solely within the context of --9 10 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, no. I -- I --11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- the student loan 12 program. 13 No, I --JUSTICE ALITO: Yeah. 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: And I don't think 15 there's any part of the statutory analysis, this 16 is Congress's judgment, that borrowers should be 17 able to get relief if the Secretary makes these 18 determinations, with no suggestion that the 19 relief should turn on or off based on the 20 possible impacts on those outside the student 21 loan program. 2.2 Congress obviously knew, when it was 23 giving this authority, to take care of borrowers 24 who are otherwise going to be worse off, that 25 that might have otherwise impacts outside the

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1 program, but it wanted to make sure the 2 Secretary could provide relief to borrowers. 3 JUSTICE ALITO: Was the Secretary 4 legally obligated to do what he did for the --GENERAL PRELOGAR: No, he was not 5 6 required to provide relief under the HEROES Act. 7 JUSTICE ALITO: All right. So he decided to do what he did and must have had 8 reasons for -- for doing it, and some of them 9 10 are -- are on the record; some may not be. But 11 the Secretary -- if you're right, then the 12 Secretary presumably could do more. 13 And, therefore, I think it's a fair 14 question to say, what is your clients' view 15 about the fairness question that some people 16 have posed and that was reiterated for you by 17 the -- the Chief Justice? 18 GENERAL PRELOGAR: The view of the 19 Department is that this relief --JUSTICE ALITO: Why is it fair? 20 21 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- is warranted. 2.2 JUSTICE ALITO: Why is it fair? If it 23 was -- if he didn't have to do it, why is it an 24 answer to say that it was warranted? Maybe it 25 was warranted, but why was it done? I guess you

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1	don't want to answer the question.
2	GENERAL PRELOGAR: It was fair
3	because, in the absence of this relief, it's
4	undisputed that there are going to be millions
5	of student-loan borrowers who are not going to
6	be able to pay their their student loans
7	JUSTICE ALITO: Yeah, I
8	GENERAL PRELOGAR: who are going
9	into default and delinquency
10	JUSTICE ALITO: And and they
11	GENERAL PRELOGAR: and the HEROES
12	Act was specifically designed for this
13	situation. This is Congress telling the
14	Secretary you don't have to let that happen.
15	And when we have this kind of a pandemic that
16	requires this kind of relief, I think that the
17	HEROES Act is operating right within its domain.
18	JUSTICE ALITO: All right. I'll try
19	one more time. Why was it fair to the people
20	who didn't get arguably comparable relief? Now
21	it may be that their interests were outweighed
22	by the interests of those who were benefited or
23	they were somehow less deserving of
24	solicitude, but what is your answer to that
25	question?

1 GENERAL PRELOGAR: My answer to that 2 question is that Congress has already made the judgment that when there is a national emergency 3 that affects borrowers in this way, the 4 Secretary can provide relief. And you could 5 make this critique of every prior exercise of 6 7 HEROES Act authority. There too, you could say, well, that 8 only benefits the specific enumerated affected 9 individuals, but it's Congress who defined those 10 11 individuals, and the Secretary acted properly 12 here in giving them relief. 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 14 Sotomayor? 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I take your 16 bottom-line answer to be everybody suffered in 17 the pandemic, but different people got different 18 benefits because they qualified under different 19 programs, correct? 20 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's right. 21 There's been enormous relief efforts. 2.2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: There's -- there's 23 inherent unfairness in society because we're not 24 a society of unlimited resources. Every law has 25 people who encompass it or people outside it.

1 Correct? 2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct. 3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And that's not an issue of fairness. It's an issue of what the 4 law protects or doesn't? 5 6 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Kagan? 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, Congress 9 passed a statute that dealt with loan repayment 10 for colleges, and it didn't pass a statute that 11 dealt with loan repayment for lawn businesses. 12 And so Congress made a choice, and 13 that may have been the right choice or it may 14 have been the wrong choice, but that's 15 Congress's choice. 16 And you're saying that the Secretary 17 implemented his powers under Congress's choice, 18 which gave him authority over loan repayment. 19 Did -- definitely did not give him authority 20 over loans for lawn care. 21 GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct. 2.2 The Secretary would have no authority to act 23 outside the student loan program. The HEROES 24 Act is specifically designed only to empower the 25 Secretary with respect to that portfolio of

1	loans.
2	JUSTICE KAGAN: And maybe as Justice
3	Sotomayor said, Congress gave a different kind
4	of authority to a different Secretary with
5	respect to a different set of activities when an
6	emergency struck. Is that correct?
7	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes.
8	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
9	Gorsuch?
10	JUSTICE GORSUCH: I just wanted to
11	make sure I understood your position with
12	respect to some of the gnarly language in this
13	statute, which is waive or modify, affected
14	individuals to ensure they're not placed in a
15	worse position financially because of the COVID
16	crisis.
17	You'd agree that doesn't authorize the
18	Secretary to place persons in a better position
19	than they were because of the COVID crisis?
20	GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I agree that the
21	purpose is to ensure that they're not worse off,
22	but I would disagree insofar as it's clear that
23	he can provide class-wide relief.
24	So, if it turns out at the end of the
25	day that some individuals are getting relief who

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1	it turns out wouldn't have needed it, Congress
2	tolerated that and, in fact, encouraged the
3	Secretary to err on the side of over-inclusion.
4	JUSTICE GORSUCH: So you read this
5	statute as not just authorizing the Secretary to
б	place people in the same position that they were
7	prior to an emergency but to allow the Secretary
8	to place persons in a better position than they
9	were prior to the emergency?
10	GENERAL PRELOGAR: No. I'm sorry.
11	Let me try to clarify. His purpose has to be to
12	ensure that they're not left worse off.
13	JUSTICE GORSUCH: But his effect can
14	be.
15	GENERAL PRELOGAR: But, if the effect
16	is that some individuals in the class receive
17	relief who wouldn't otherwise need it, that
18	doesn't mean that his plan is invalid.
19	But if I could respond
20	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Let me
21	GENERAL PRELOGAR: to your question
22	about better off/worse off
23	JUSTICE GORSUCH: let me just
24	I'm sorry, let me pose a different question.
25	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yeah.

1	JUSTICE GORSUCH: So some persons can
2	be better off is your position. I I guess
3	how many is my next question, right? Let's say
4	it it's two people in Missouri, okay, all
5	right, they're better off, fine. But what if
б	it's 90 percent of the class just hypothetically
7	that could could the Secretary do that
8	under this statute?
9	GENERAL PRELOGAR: So I think the
10	right way to analyze that would be under
11	arbitrary and capricious review because, as I've
12	just explained, we think the statute tolerates
13	some overbreadth. And so, at that point, you
14	would want to look at the Secretary's
15	justification for his action.
16	It sounds to me like that could be
17	unreasonable, that maybe he wouldn't be able to
18	justify that particular line-drawing choice
19	because it would be so extensive relief that
20	isn't actually necessary.
21	But one of the things you'd want to
22	look at is whether there was a way to tailor it,
23	whether there was a way to segregate the people
24	who actually needed the relief from not.
25	JUSTICE GORSUCH: I I understand

1 that. I --2 GENERAL PRELOGAR: And just in case 3 you think this plan does that, Justice Gorsuch 4 _ _ 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, no, no. I -- I 6 -- I'm --7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- it -- it does 8 not. 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- I'm asking a 10 hypothetical. And -- and I understand your 11 point you direct us to arbitrary and capricious 12 review. 13 With respect to the fairness question 14 that the Chief Justice posed, would that --15 would that -- would you direct us as well to 16 maybe State Farm, for example, where the 17 Secretary has to weigh not just the benefits to 18 the persons he's acting to favor but also the 19 cost to others? 20 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that that 21 is a more natural way to analyze those issues. 22 I should emphasize because we're in this case --23 JUSTICE GORSUCH: But you'd agree that 24 25 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- that these

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1 individual borrowers didn't raise --2 JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, I --3 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- a State Farm 4 argument. JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- I know that. I 5 know that. I --6 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: So they're not making these fairness allegations. 8 9 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- I -- I hear you. But you'd agree that that would be a relevant 10 11 consideration at some stage in a court's 12 analysis of -- of -- of -- of the Secretary's 13 action? 14 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I don't think that 15 the Secretary could be faulted for not 16 considering the interests of non-student-loan 17 borrowers because I don't think that's one of 18 the relevant interests that Congress expected him to take into account under this authority. 19 20 As we've been discussing, laws all the 21 time --JUSTICE GORSUCH: So no, it's just --2.2 23 it's just irrelevant? GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes. I think 24 25 that -- that his charge under the HEROES Act is

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1 to determine whether student-loan borrowers need 2 this relief. 3 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I appreciate it. Thank you. That's clarifying. Thank you. 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: 5 Justice 6 Kavanauqh? 7 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Just to pick up on the Chief Justice's and Justice Alito's 8 9 questions, if we're thinking about how to 10 interpret the statute and we're trying to think 11 about the context of the statute in interpreting 12 it, the word "waive" in isolation, one thing, the word -- but it doesn't use cancellation, so 13 14 that cuts the other way. I take your response 15 to that. 16 But then you're thinking about 17 contextually how it all works, it fits together, the fact that there will be winners and losers, 18 19 big winners and big losers, relatively speaking, if the executive branch has this kind of 20 21 authority, people who didn't go to college, as the Chief Justice said, or people who had just 2.2 23 paid -- who had paid off their loans, who say 24 what they did to pay off their loans and they're 25 getting no relief because of the timing of the

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1 situation. 2 And if Congress were doing this, 3 Congress could and would, no doubt, try to -would hear about all of that and factor all that 4 in in a way that a Secretary could not, 5 especially without notice-and-comment. 6 7 Should any of that factor into how we think about whether to give a broad reading to 8 "waive" or a narrower reading to "waive," given 9 10 the context? 11 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No, I don't think 12 that that should factor into how to interpret the statute. I think instead, as this Court 13 14 usually does, it needs to consider that text on 15 its own terms. And I don't see any way to read 16 the provision "to waive or modify any Title IV 17 provision" to mean but only do it a little bit, 18 only in response to minor emergencies. 19 It would actually be perverse to 20 suggest that when there's a big emergency that 21 might necessitate broader relief, the 2.2 Secretary's more disabled from acting. 23 Instead, that's the language in the 24 statute that's meant to empower the Secretary 25 and to ensure that he has whatever tools are

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1 necessary to fulfill the statutory purpose, to 2 ensure that borrowers are not left worse off. 3 With respect to these concerns about whether there's room to take into account other 4 interests beyond student-loan borrowers, you 5 6 know, there are avenues to go to Congress for 7 additional relief, to implement other programs. 8 There's been unprecedented levels of 9 COVID pandemic aid, as I mentioned, and I think 10 to suggest that the Secretary here should have 11 told borrowers who he had determined were at 12 massive risk of default and delinquency in 13 record numbers that he wasn't going to use the 14 authority under the HEROES Act that's 15 tailor-made to prevent that result would have 16 been an -- an irresponsible thing to do. 17 So, again, I think that this really 18 comes down to Congress's judgment that there 19 should be authority to provide the benefit 20 within the context of this program. Obviously, 21 there are additional authorities and benefits 2.2 that can be provided under other programs. 23 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: A separate 24 question. The student loan issue is a major 25 public policy issue without regard to COVID to

begin with, obviously, and how to deal with that and the burdens it's imposing on people after they get out of college who have massive student loans to pay back, obviously, a huge public policy issue that was being considered before COVID.

7 Should that factor into how we think 8 about this? In other words, this is something 9 that was on the table, being discussed, being 10 debated, and then all of a sudden it's -- this 11 public policy idea is attached that was being 12 proposed and pursued before the pandemic is 13 attached to pandemic legislation?

14 Matter at all?

15 GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think that it's 16 really hard to think about how that should work 17 as a matter of statutory interpretation and 18 specifically what kind of burden this Court 19 would be putting on Congress if it goes down 20 that road.

If you put yourself back in the shoes of the 2003 Congress, it couldn't necessarily anticipate exactly what would be the subjects of political discussion and debate at the time that the COVID national emergency pandemic hit. And

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1	so going down the road of suggesting the meaning
2	of the statute could change or it should be
3	interpreted in a in an atextual way because
4	of current conditions, I think, would basically
5	disable Congress from being able to take the
6	kind of action we have here of trying to ensure
7	that the executive can act quickly, with
8	preauthorization, in an emergency, to forestall
9	massive student-loan default.
10	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Okay. Last
11	question. I can't resist on Justice Gorsuch's
12	earlier question.
13	(Laughter.)
14	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: If if it were
15	party-specific relief and it went up to the
16	court of appeals and the court of and you had
17	sought an emergency injunction in the court of
18	appeals and the court of appeals ruled against
19	the government on that, would you then follow
20	that in that circuit or not?
21	GENERAL PRELOGAR: I think, as a
22	practical matter, we generally do follow that in
23	the circuit. I want to be careful here because
24	I
25	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Because you might

1 not in the future, right? 2 (Laughter.) 3 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, no. JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: You could admit 4 5 it. 6 (Laughter.) 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Our general 8 practice is yes, we --9 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Yeah. 10 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- we treat it as 11 binding within the relevant circuit. But, 12 again, the concern here is that, actually, it's 13 imposing on us an obligation to follow it 14 throughout the nation. 15 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: And if you came up 16 to this Court in an emergency application and we 17 said you did not have a likelihood of success, I 18 think you said earlier you would follow that. 19 Why would you follow that? 20 GENERAL PRELOGAR: We recognize that 21 this Court has authority to resolve these issues 2.2 for the nation. So the same kind of --23 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Even though there 24 are only two parties in the case, you would say 25 we're going to follow it for everyone else and

1	not force every other affected individual to
2	come to court? Do you think every future
3	administration will have that same approach?
4	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Well, I think that
5	they would likewise understand that even if the
6	relief didn't formally extend beyond the parties
7	in the case, obviously, the precedential force
8	of this Court's decisions in a given area rule
9	for the nation.
10	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Thank you.
11	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice
12	Barrett?
13	JUSTICE BARRETT: I won't ask you
14	about universal vacatur.
15	(Laughter.)
16	JUSTICE BARRETT: I just want to ask
17	you one thing about the statutory language on
18	"waive or modify" that I wonder whether it's an
19	indication of the scope of "waive or modify."
20	So the Secretary has the authority to
21	waive or modify to ensure that affected
22	individuals are not placed in a worse position
23	financially in relation to that financial
24	assistance, so in relation to their debt.
25	So you agree, right, that we're not

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1 talking about a worse financial position 2 generally; we're just talking about in 3 relationship to the debt? GENERAL PRELOGAR: That's correct. 4 The two often collapse, obviously, because --5 6 JUSTICE BARRETT: Right. 7 GENERAL PRELOGAR: -- if you are distressed financially, it might mean that 8 9 you're having trouble paying your mortgage or 10 paying your rent, buying your groceries, and 11 paying your debt. But, yes, the -- the function 12 of the HEROES Act focuses on your position with 13 respect to your ability to repay your student 14 loans. 15 JUSTICE BARRETT: So it seems to me 16 that that language "in relation to that 17 financial assistance" suggests that the 18 relationship would continue, but the waiver or 19 modification here severed the relationship to the debt so that it no longer exists. 20 21 So why would that be consistent? Ι 2.2 mean, doesn't the statutory language "in 23 relation to that financial assistance" 24 presuppose an ongoing relationship that might be 25 modified but not completely ended?

1 GENERAL PRELOGAR: No. I think that 2 that would be reading in limitations that can't be gleaned from the text. What we understand 3 the statute to be focusing on, and specifically 4 looking at the subparagraph here that justified 5 6 this Act, making sure that student-loan 7 borrowers are not worse off with respect to their loans, that functions as a matter of their 8 9 probability of being able to actually make their 10 payments. 11 And this actually relates to some of

12 the questions that Justice Gorsuch was asking about better off, worse off. You know, imagine 13 14 a student-loan borrower, for example, who before 15 the pandemic had her affairs entirely in order. 16 She had a zero percent chance of defaulting on that debt. But then COVID hit. Her life has 17 18 been disrupted. Her job was disrupted. 19 Inflation is at record levels. She's having trouble making ends meet. And now she has a 20 much higher likelihood of -- of not being able 21 2.2 to pay her student loans. 23 In that situation, HEROES Act relief, 24 if it were to operate even to completely 25 eliminate her debt so she doesn't have an

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1 ongoing relationship with it, it would just 2 restore her to her pre-pandemic relation insofar as her risk of default and -- and delinquency. 3 She was zero percent before and now she'll be 4 zero percent after. And so it doesn't 5 inherently make her better off within the 6 7 meaning of the statute. 8 JUSTICE BARRETT: Okay. Thank you. 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice 10 Jackson? 11 JUSTICE JACKSON: I just wanted to 12 quickly circle back to the fairness point. I 13 quess I'm wondering whether or not the same 14 fairness issue would arise with respect to any 15 federal benefit program. So I'm thinking about 16 the fact that, as a result of COVID, we had 17 massive infusions of money given to various 18 companies, organizations, clearly authorized 19 because Congress said do it. 20 I'm wondering whether it -- that would 21 be unfair to people who didn't own a company or somebody who didn't have, you know, a nonprofit 2.2 and wasn't getting that money. I just don't 23 24 know how far we can go with this notion of, to 25 the extent that the government is providing

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1 much-needed assistance to people in an 2 emergency, it's going to be unfair to those who 3 don't get the same benefit. 4 GENERAL PRELOGAR: Yes, that's exactly right, and what I would say is that is 5 6 inherently an aspect of what Congress authorized 7 in the HEROES Act as well. It specifically thought about this situation, what to do about 8 9 student-loan borrowers who are impacted by a 10 national emergency who might then end up in a 11 worse position with respect to their ability to 12 repay, and Congress made the judgment you can give them relief. 13 14 And with any benefits program, there 15 are going to be others outside the context of 16 that particular program who aren't getting the 17 benefit. But I don't see how that could 18 possibly provide a basis to just say that you're 19 paralyzed in doing what Congress intended to 20 ensure that the class they were focused on gets 21 the relief they need. 2.2 Thank you. JUSTICE JACKSON: 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 24 General. 25 Mr. Connolly?

1	ORAL ARGUMENT OF J. MICHAEL CONNOLLY
2	ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
3	MR. CONNOLLY: Mr. Chief Justice, and
4	may it please the Court:
5	This case turns on the same issue as
б	Nebraska versus Biden, whether the HEROES Act
7	authorizes the debt forgiveness program. It
8	does not, as this Court has already heard. I'd
9	like to focus here on three issues specific to
10	this case.
11	First, the HEROES Act is the
12	Secretary's only excuse for not adopting the
13	program through negotiated rulemaking and
14	notice-and-comment. If that Act does not apply,
15	there is no dispute that the program is
16	procedurally improper.
17	Second, on standing, the government
18	makes one argument, that if Respondents prevail,
19	the Secretary won't provide debt forgiveness to
20	them under the HEROES Act. But that isn't the
21	proper inquiry.
22	Respondents need only show that there
23	is some possibility that the relief they seek
24	will prompt the Secretary to forgive their
25	debts. On that question, there is no debate.

1 Debt forgiveness is a top priority of this 2 Administration. The parties agree that the 3 Secretary can forgive debts under the Higher Education Act, and the Secretary has never 4 denied that he may follow the proper procedures 5 and forgive Respondents' debts after his current 6 7 program is declared unlawful. Finally, on the merits, Congress did 8

9 not authorize the Secretary to create a \$400 billion debt forgiveness program behind closed 10 11 doors with no public involvement. The whole 12 point of negotiated rulemaking and 13 notice-and-comment is that the individuals most 14 affected by student loan regulations, like the 15 Respondents, must have a meaningful voice in the 16 regulatory process.

17 But, here, the Respondents were 18 deprived of their procedural rights, and their 19 finances suffered. Brown got nothing, and Taylor received only \$10,000, even though 20 21 high-income individuals making more than five 2.2 times as much got \$20,000. The law requires 23 that the Secretary give Respondents an 24 opportunity to be heard. 25 The judgment below should be affirmed.

1 JUSTICE THOMAS: Mr. Connolly, has 2 this Court ever held that the notice-and-comment provisions of the APA can establish -- are 3 4 enough for standing in a -- in a case like this? MR. CONNOLLY: Yeah. I would -- I 5 6 would point to Summers. In Summers, this Court 7 held that an environmental organization had standing to challenge the Forest Service's 8 9 approval of the Burnt Ridge Project and --10 because the Forest Service approved that without 11 going through notice-and-comment. And that 12 environmental organization had standing because 13 there was some possibility that if they went 14 through the proper process, that the Forest 15 Service would change its mind and wouldn't 16 approve the Burnt Ridge Project. 17 And I think it's the same thing here. 18 If the Secretary goes through the proper 19 process, there is some -- and does negotiated 20 rulemaking and notice-and-comment, there's some 21 possibility that he will change his mind and 2.2 forgive our debts. 23 JUSTICE THOMAS: Were the procedures in Summers applied in Summers? 24 25 MR. CONNOLLY: Were they implied? I

1 think it was his --2 JUSTICE THOMAS: No, applied. 3 MR. CONNOLLY: Oh, applied. In that case, yes, the -- the Court said -- the Court 4 found -- it was drawing a distinction between 5 6 why they would have had standing in one place 7 and wouldn't have in another. And the reason that the group ultimately didn't have standing 8 9 is because they had settled it. But the Court said that if -- if Burnt Ridge had still been on 10 11 the table, that they would have had standing. 12 JUSTICE JACKSON: Doesn't your theory 13 of injury rely on the assumption that if the 14 HEROES Act isn't there or if there's a problem 15 with the HEROES Act, the administration would 16 necessarily have done the same thing under the 17 HEA? 18 MR. CONNOLLY: No, I don't think so. 19 In -- in fact, I think the program will look 20 quite different once it does go through negotiated rulemaking and notice-and-comment. 21 2.2 JUSTICE JACKSON: No, I quess I'm 23 asking you -- you seem to be assuming that if you get the relief of invalidation of the action 24 25 under the HEROES Act, that the administration

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1 would necessarily move forward -- because you 2 said it was a top priority of this Administration -- that they would necessarily do 3 the same thing or a similar thing, meaning 4 provide debt relief to people under the other 5 6 legal avenue. 7 And, I -- I mean, I can imagine a world, if you think of a hypothetical, in which 8 9 the Secretary believes that they -- that -- that 10 the Department only has authority under the 11 HEROES Act. Here we are in the midst of a 12 pandemic. The intention of the Department is to 13 provide this relief in the context of the 14 emergency and that if we don't have an emergency 15 and that if we're not in this circumstance and 16 we don't see the HEROES Act there, then they 17 would not move forward. 18 So I think you kind of have to 19 convince us that the Administration would have provided this sort of debt relief under the 20 21 authority you point to that you say has the 2.2 procedures that were not provided. 23 MR. CONNOLLY: Two responses. I think the best evidence for this is the nature of the 24 25 program. The program applies to 95 percent of

all borrowers. It's not remotely tailored to
individuals who are suffering from the pandemic,
and the reason is because this is a program
that's just designed to help people who are in
need of debt relief.
And on the authority point, the
parties are in agreement that they have the

8 power to do this under -- under the HEA. And 9 the Secretary has never come up here and denied 10 that they won't do -- go through the exact same 11 process, which they should have done in the 12 first place, once this program is declared 13 unlawful.

14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Except my biggest 15 problem is you've shown me nothing to suggest 16 that if they'd have to or will go under HEA, 17 that they're going to deprive you of due 18 They're going to let you be heard. process. 19 What Justice Jackson was getting to is 20 you could be heard and not accepted. I mean, your position could be rejected. Then we'd have 21 2.2 to look at that program and decide if that 23 program fits the HEA requirements and the 24 arbitrary and capricious standard. 25 But there is no injury that you're

1 suffering unless you get a speculative new plan 2 that goes into effect. You have no proof that 3 if a speculative new plan does arise under the 4 HEA that you're going to be deprived of notice-and-comment. And you certainly can't say 5 6 if they rule against that interest and you've 7 had notice and an opportunity to be heard that 8 it was arbitrary and capricious. 9 So I'm at a loss as to how you have standing because there is no notice and 10 11 procedure required under the HEROES Act. The 12 only way you can win is if you strike down this 13 program completely, and that means that you 14 don't get an opportunity to be heard, but nobody 15 else does either. 16 MR. CONNOLLY: The Secretary created a 17 \$400 billion debt forgiveness program. Under --18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No. You're -you're arguing what the state's arguing. I'm 19 20 asking about you. 21 MR. CONNOLLY: Sure. 2.2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You as a student, 23 wants the HEROES Act -- your \$10,000 student --MR. CONNOLLY: Yeah. 24 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- is going to get

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1 nothing. He's not going to get 20,000. You 2 strike it down, he gets nothing. Neither does 3 your person who wants something. This is so totally illogical to me 4 that you come into court to say I want more, I'm 5 6 going to file a suit to get more, but I know I'm 7 going to get nothing. 8 MR. CONNOLLY: So the Secretary created a -- a -- a massive debt forgiveness 9 10 program, and he says that he's doing it one time 11 and one time only. He said this in his brief, 12 in his declarations, on its website, and in the 13 reply brief, he said he took costs into account. 14 And so, if we miss this shot, we will 15 never have another opportunity to get debt 16 forgiveness. 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, you can -- the 18 General said you can --19 JUSTICE JACKSON: I don't know if that 20 hurts you or helps you. I mean, that --21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- always go under 2.2 the HEA. 23 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- it seems to hurt 24 you to -- to suggest that. I thought your 25 argument was, if we strike down this program,

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1 then we know the Secretary is going to try again 2 under the HEA and that's the relief that we are 3 seeking, the procedures that exist under that 4 program. So, if he's done, if we strike it 5 6 down, aren't -- isn't Justice Sotomayor right 7 that you're in a much worse position by bringing this lawsuit? 8 9 MR. CONNOLLY: He's -- we're in a --10 if -- if he completes the program, but we 11 are ask -- we are trying to stop this program so 12 that it can go through the proper process so 13 that we have an opportunity to comment and urge 14 the Secretary to forgive our debts. 15 Right now, Ms. Brown has \$17,000 in 16 student loan debts and she's not getting a dime 17 of debt forgiveness. 18 And if this had gone through the 19 proper process, there's some possibility that we 20 would have had our debts forgiven. And if -- in 21 -- in Lujan, what Lujan talks about is this is 2.2 why procedural rights are special, because the 23 agency can always come in and say, you know 24 what, we would have done the exact same thing 25 even if we -- you would have had that process,

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1 your -- your injuries aren't redressable, 2 they're speculative. But that's why procedural 3 rights are -- are special. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Do you rely --4 to what extent do you rely on the fact that your 5 clients include an existing student loan 6 7 borrower and that you have a little different than one that is not, in other words, it's not 8 speculative in the question of how would that be 9 person be remedied, but it is another borrower. 10 11 You're asking for notice-and-comment. 12 And, during that period, if it's granted, that would -- it -- it would entitle 13 14 you to raise, you know, why the limit, whatever 15 the credit limit is, that should -- should be 16 changed. Is that -- I mean, I think your 17 challenge is -- is to make that sufficiently 18 particularized and non-speculative. 19 I mean, the -- the problem with 20 standing jurisprudence for something that looks 21 for something concrete and particularized, it's 2.2 also very academic, you know, a dollar of injury 23 and you're in, hundreds of millions that they 24 can't trace directly to the agency action and --25 and you're not.

1	So what is it that makes the interest
2	of your client who has, what, a \$17,000 loan?
3	MR. CONNOLLY: Right.
4	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How is that
5	sufficiently concrete and particularized in the
б	context of something that the government would
7	address if it can't do what it's doing now?
8	MR. CONNOLLY: Sure. So she I I
9	think it is critical that we're we're here
10	representing borrowers. She has student loan
11	debt and it's not being repaid, and that
12	those are concrete interests at stake.
13	So this is not someone off the street
14	who is upset that his or her taxes are going to
15	go up. That that there's no question that
16	would be a that wouldn't be a that would
17	be a generalized grievance. But, here, if you
18	look at the scope and the purpose of the
19	program, it's to help student-loan borrowers.
20	But instead of doing this through
21	negotiated rulemaking and notice-and-comment,
22	they they did they carved up the lines and
23	they did it all in secret.
24	I I'd point the Court to page 31 of
25	the government's reply brief. In that on

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1 that page, the -- the government said that it 2 had extensive discussions with banks and 3 ultimately decided not to forgive FFEL loans. 4 That's the type of thing that should be happening on the public record. 5 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: But, Mr. Connolly, 7 aren't you really fighting Congress on this one? 8 The HEROES Act specifically says no notice-and-comment, no negotiated rulemaking. 9 10 Specifically says there's going to be an 11 emergency, so we're waiving those procedural 12 requirements. 13 So, you know, you might think that Congress made a wrong call there, but that's 14 15 Congress's call. 16 MR. CONNOLLY: Because, when -- when 17 Congress wrote the HEROES Act, the waivers and 18 modifications have to actually be authorized by 19 the Act. You can't just label something a 20 waiver or modification and skip through 21 negotiated rulemaking and notice-and-comment. 2.2 Right there, subsection (d), it says 23 the negotiated rulemaking requirements shall not apply to the waivers and modifications 24 25 authorized or required by the Act.

1 It doesn't say anything that the Secretary labels a waiver or modification is 2 3 authorized by or required by the Act. And so we recognize that -- that 4 Congress did create an exception, but the 5 waivers and modifications actually have to 6 7 apply. They have to actually be authorized by the HEROES Act. 8 9 JUSTICE BARRETT: Mr. Connolly, what are the limits of your theory? Could someone 10 11 who finished paying their loans off, you know, 12 right last year sue because they were 13 disappointed that they weren't included for 14 reimbursement? 15 MR. CONNOLLY: No, I don't think so 16 because there's -- there's no mechanism by which 17 the Department of Education can -- can -- can 18 write those borrowers a check, and so their --19 their injuries are not redressable. 20 Here, there is a mechanism under which 21 the Secretary can forgive Ms. Brown's debts, forgive Mr. Taylor's debts, and that's the 2.2 23 difference. JUSTICE BARRETT: What about the Chief 24 25 Justice's lawn -- lawn care person who doesn't

go to college, starts a lawn care business, but 1 2 3 MR. CONNOLLY: Right. JUSTICE BARRETT: -- as the Chief 4 said, this person has some fairness concerns and 5 6 feels like this shouldn't have happened and --7 and kind of level up or level down and wants to level down. 8 9 MR. CONNOLLY: Sure. Again, the 10 Secretary -- or the Secretary of Education has 11 no power to give any money to that individual or 12 do anything like that, and so the -- even if he could come up with a concrete interest, it 13 14 couldn't be redressable. 15 JUSTICE BARRETT: Could have persuaded 16 him not to do it, would be, I -- I -- I take it, 17 with the fairness concern in the hypothetical the Chief posed you, I think it would have been 18 19 to say, well, this isn't fair, you're not doing 20 this for me, so you shouldn't have done it for 21 anyone. But you're not taking the position that 2.2 that would be an injury in fact. MR. CONNOLLY: No, he would not 23 24 because you -- you have to have -- you have to 25 have concrete interests, it has to be

1 particularized, can't be abstract. And so --2 JUSTICE BARRETT: So it's not just the 3 getting shut out of notice-and-comment, in other words? 4 MR. CONNOLLY: Correct, correct. 5 These individuals have concrete interests. 6 7 There was a \$400 billion debt forgiveness program that was created, and the Respondents 8 9 have debts and they're not being forgiven, and 10 if it had gone through the proper process, 11 negotiated rulemaking and notice-and-comment, we 12 could have argued that you -- our debts should

13 be forgiven too.

14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The suggestion 15 is not that the Secretary of Education should 16 forgive on behalf of different banks loans to 17 loan service companies. It's that that is a 18 consideration of other Americans in a comparable 19 situation who will not get that sort of relief 20 that maybe the Secretary should have taken into 21 account. And then, if we had notice-and-comment 2.2 rulemaking, the -- that maybe -- that would be a 23 consideration that would be -- come forth, or maybe if Congress were involved in this 24 25 expenditure of \$500 billion, that that might be

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1 something that they could consider. 2 MR. CONNOLLY: Right. And -- and I 3 would also point to negotiated rule -- the negotiated rulemaking statute. This is a unique 4 statute that Congress said specifically that it 5 wanted all of the individuals who are affected 6 7 by the Title IV loan process, student-loan borrowers, universities, everyone, it wants them 8 9 to be involved in the process. And it 10 strengthened those requirements in 1998. 11 And so the idea, I think, that right 12 after doing that, really strengthening negotiated rulemaking, that Congress said, yeah, 13 14 you can create a \$400 billion program on your 15 own in secret without any public involvement, it 16 just doesn't -- it just doesn't seem possible. 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But what is --18 what is the limiting principle? I mean, there 19 are many, many programs out there that people say, well, I ought to -- you know, I ought to be 20 21 covered by that and I wasn't. 2.2 And -- and we certainly don't allow 23 everybody to come in and say just because I would have a right to comment, if this -- if 24 25 this law were struck down, I therefore have a

1 right to bring a -- bring a suit. I mean, how 2 is this -- I understand maybe -- you have the 3 one client that has a student loan and one that doesn't, right? 4 5 MR. CONNOLLY: Right. 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, there's 7 a clear difference between those two situations, isn't there? 8 9 MR. CONNOLLY: Sorry. They both have -- they both have student loan debts right now. 10 Brown has 17,000, and Taylor has \$35,000 in 11 12 debt. 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Oh, okay. 14 Well -- well, what principle should we look at 15 to try to limit the universe of people who --16 because, otherwise, you get people --17 MR. CONNOLLY: Right. 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- who are 19 interested in any kind of law at all and say I 20 have something to say that the Secretary might 21 find of interest in notice-and-comment, and so I 2.2 should be able to sue to block what's there now. 23 MR. CONNOLLY: I -- I think you have 24 to look at the -- the scope and purpose of the 25 agency action. Was the individual's concrete

1 interest at stake? If they're doing something 2 that has no relation to what you're complaining 3 about, your concrete interest, then it's coming out of left field and that person isn't going to 4 have standing. Or, if there's no possibility 5 6 that the Secretary is going to give you relief 7 because we're dealing with Topic A and you're 8 coming in here on Topic B, then that person 9 isn't going to have standing.

10 But, here, we have -- there is no 11 dispute they're -- the Secretary is trying to 12 give release to student-loan borrowers. That's the nature and the -- the scope and the purpose 13 14 of this Act. And instead of figuring out, okay, 15 among this universe of student-loan borrowers, 16 who's going to get what, how much, instead of 17 doing that on the public record, they did it in 18 secret first.

JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: So, for purposes
 of standing, as distinct as to who can comment,
 because anyone can comment --

22 MR. CONNOLLY: Right.

JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: -- for standing purposes, it has to be someone who is in the class of people who could have been afforded

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1 relief? Is that --MR. CONNOLLY: Yeah, I -- I think 2 3 that's a fair way to put it. You have to have -- you have to have concrete interests. It has 4 to be particularized. And that's -- and -- and 5 that's what we have here, I think. 6 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: And if I understand your -- your theory, it's once you strike down 8 9 this program, then the Secretary just uses 10 authority under the HEA? Is that the nature of 11 your theory? Which would include 12 notice-and-comment and negotiated rulemaking? 13 MR. CONNOLLY: The HEA gives the 14 Secretary the power --15 JUSTICE KAGAN: But -- but the theory 16 is that the Secretary will just switch to 17 another statute? 18 MR. CONNOLLY: Well, I think that's focusing -- you look at the agency action. You 19 look at the facts on the ground of what's 20 21 actually happening. 2.2 JUSTICE KAGAN: But you're striking 23 down this program. That's the whole point of 24 your being there. You're trying to -- this 25 program is not -- right?

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1 MR. CONNOLLY: Yes. 2 JUSTICE KAGAN: You have to strike 3 down this program to get any possibility of 4 notice-and-comment under another statute, right? MR. CONNOLLY: Right. 5 6 JUSTICE KAGAN: So you have to strike 7 down this program. Then you go under another statute and -- where you do get 8 9 notice-and-comment. That's the theory? 10 MR. CONNOLLY: That is -- that is 11 correct. The HEA gives us a right -- they have 12 to go through negotiated rulemaking and notice-and-comment. 13 I mean, 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Right. 15 usually, when we give standing for procedural 16 violations, we're talking about procedural 17 violations within a particular program, right? 18 We're not talking about, you know, if you have a 19 problem with the procedures relating to one 20 program, you can just come in and strike down 21 the program so that you're in another statute 22 entirely. MR. CONNOLLY: Well, I don't think 23 it's right to look at -- to focus on the -- the 24 -- the statute that they're using as -- as an 25

1	excuse. When you look at what we look at
2	JUSTICE KAGAN: It's the statute they
3	acted under.
4	MR. CONNOLLY: Well, I
5	JUSTICE KAGAN: And it's a statute
6	that says you don't have to use
7	notice-and-comment.
8	MR. CONNOLLY: Well, I think we focus
9	on the agency action at issue. So, in Lujan,
10	the the Lujan Footnote 7, the agency is
11	proving a dam. In Summers, the agency is
12	tearing down a forest. Here, the agency is
13	is doing debt forgiveness. I think you look at
14	the action.
15	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What
16	JUSTICE KAGAN: Suppose
17	MR. CONNOLLY: I would point to
18	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Go ahead.
19	JUSTICE KAGAN: Suppose there were no
20	HEA. Suppose it was this statute or nothing.
21	Would you then say you still have standing
22	because, once you strike down this this
23	this program, you know, the Secretary would go
24	back to Congress and get a new statute?
25	MR. CONNOLLY: No, I don't think so.

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1 At that point, there would be no possibility 2 that he would go back and -- and give us --3 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, yes, there is a possibility. He goes back to Congress and says 4 this is terrible, nobody can get loan 5 forgiveness, so I'll go back and get a new 6 7 statute. MR. CONNOLLY: That would -- that 8 9 relief would be coming from Congress. The --10 the -- the -- the way you look at the 11 redressability is whether there's some 12 possibility that the agency will reconsider its 13 decision -- will reconsider its decision. And, 14 here, the decision was the debt forgiveness 15 program. 16 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What --17 MR. CONNOLLY: And so --18 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Keep going. 19 Sorry. 20 MR. CONNOLLY: And so you look -- you 21 look at the -- you look at the agency action. 2.2 And the -- the one -- the other line of cases I 23 would point to is -- is the structural 24 separation of powers cases. In those cases, you 25 focus on the agency action. You don't look to

1 see whether the Act's -- the actions -- or the Act's restrictions on removal are injuring the 2 3 individual. You look at whether the agency's actions are injuring the individual. 4 And I think it's the same thing here. 5 6 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What's your best 7 case, if you have one, for your answer to Justice Kagan's question about you going under a 8 9 different statute? Are -- are you aware of such 10 a case? 11 MR. CONNOLLY: The -- I quess a few 12 responses. First, I would go back to the -- the ones I just mentioned, Lujan and Summers. 13 14 They're -- none -- none of those cases focused 15 on the statute at issue. They looked at the 16 action. Lujan Footnote 7, the -- the dam 17 example, an individual who is living next to a 18 dam, when they approve that dam without going 19 through the proper process, that individual has 20 a procedural right to challenge that. 21 When the agency approves the dam, 2.2 they're approving it under the Federal Power 23 Act. When the individual is going to get 24 relief, he's getting it under the Endangered 25 Species Act. And I think what that footnote

1 shows and what that example shows is that the 2 statute really doesn't matter, what they're 3 acting under. What matters is the agency 4 action. JUSTICE JACKSON: Well, let me ask you 5 about the evidence. What -- what evidence do 6 7 you need, as the plaintiff coming in claiming standing, that the agency would have proceeded 8 under this other statute? Because it's not a 9 10 world in which, you know, they overlap so 11 entirely that if we take one away, they're 12 automatically in the world of --MR. CONNOLLY: Right. 13 14 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- HEA. They would 15 have to actually elect to operate in that other 16 world. And so this goes back to my very first 17 question to you, which was about don't we --18 aren't you relying on the assumption that if the 19 HEROES Act falls, this agency or this -- this Administration would pursue the same course of 20 21 action under this other statute? 2.2 MR. CONNOLLY: Sure. A few responses. 23 First, if you look at the nature of the action, it is applying to 95 percent of all 24 25 borrowers. It's not remotely tailored --

1 JUSTICE JACKSON: Do you have --2 MR. CONNOLLY: -- to the pandemic. 3 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- evidence that they've said, even pursuant to this litigation, 4 for example, that if the Supreme Court strikes 5 6 this down, we're going to pursue the same relief 7 under the HEA? I'm asking about the -- like what do --8 9 MR. CONNOLLY: Sure. 10 JUSTICE JACKSON: Is it enough for you 11 just to identify another path? Don't you have 12 to at least have some evidence that the Administration is going to move in that 13 direction? 14 15 MR. CONNOLLY: So, yes. So, again, I 16 would point to the -- the nature of the rule, 17 that it's broad-based. It's not -- it's not 18 tied to the pandemic. 19 The second thing I would point to is that there's all sorts of evidence. When --20 21 during the -- during the campaign, they were 2.2 talking about doing broad-based debt relief. Ιt 23 wasn't related to the pandemic. Senator Warren 24 and others passed resolutions urging the 25 Secretary to use the Higher Education Act to

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1 pass debt forgiveness. Scholars have written 2 about this --3 JUSTICE JACKSON: And yet --MR. CONNOLLY: -- legal --4 JUSTICE JACKSON: -- and yet the 5 6 Secretary chose this path. So I guess I'm just 7 trying to say, do we have something from the 8 Secretary saying that, you know, we're 9 definitely doing this under all circumstances 10 and we're -- we pick the HEA if the HEROES Act 11 falls? 12 MR. CONNOLLY: I think that would be a 13 very high burden for us to meet. 14 JUSTICE JACKSON: Thank you. 15 MR. CONNOLLY: Because, if you look, 16 again, at Footnote 7 of Lujan, when it's talking 17 about why procedural rights are special, what 18 it's saying is that if -- if the burden is on 19 the plaintiff to come back and say, you know, my 20 comments are going to be amazing, they're going 21 to do this, they're going to change their mind, 22 procedural rights are going -- are going to be 23 useless. They can always come back and say --24 JUSTICE JACKSON: No, but that's --25 MR. CONNOLLY: -- you know what, we

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1 would have done the same thing --JUSTICE JACKSON: -- change your mind 2 3 within the context of a particular program. That's -- this is Justice Kagan's point. 4 I mean, yes, redressability gets 5 relaxed when we're in the world in which 6 7 procedural rights would have otherwise existed and you don't have to as a plaintiff show that 8 they would have made a different ultimate 9 10 determination if they'd heard your comments. 11 MR. CONNOLLY: Right. 12 JUSTICE JACKSON: We understand that. 13 But what you're suggesting is that same 14 principle of redressability applies to whether 15 or not they would shift to an entirely different 16 legal base of authority to pursue this program. 17 And I've never seen that before. 18 MR. CONNOLLY: And -- and -- and, 19 again, I -- I think this exact -- this -- this 20 program, they could have -- they could have 21 cited Section 1082 of the HEA to go under it. 2.2 They -- they believe they can do it. 23 They've said it in their brief that they can do it. The reason they -- I -- I -- my quess is 24 25 the reason why they didn't do that is because

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1	they would have had to go under negotiated
2	rulemaking and notice-and-comment.
3	And if you look at the the
4	the the breadth of this program, it's not
5	about the it's not about helping people who
6	are uniquely suffering from the pandemic. It's
7	helping 95 percent of all borrowers and
8	except for except for the Respondents here.
9	And so I think, when you look at the
10	nature of the of the program at issue, plus
11	the campaign statements, plus the fact that
12	they've never gotten up here and and denied
13	it, you put all that together, and I think we
14	have a strong at a minimum, some possibility
15	that they're going to get when this program
16	is declared unlawful and they go back to the
17	drawing board, I don't think they're going to
18	fold up shop. I think they're going to say, how
19	about the HEA?
20	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: What's your theory
21	if any, and maybe I should be asking the other
22	side this, but your theory for why they didn't
23	want notice-and-comment?
24	MR. CONNOLLY: I I think because
25	it's it's a it's a long the

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1 negotiated rulemaking process and the 2 notice-and-comment process, I mean, it's a long process, and agencies probably would -- most 3 4 agencies would prefer not to have to do that. JUSTICE KAGAN: And this is an 5 6 emergency, and emergency statutes typically do 7 not have notice-and-comment, do they? MR. CONNOLLY: If this were authorized 8 9 by the HEROES Act, then they could have gone under it. But it's not. 10 11 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: They could have 12 done a good cause exception, though, right? MR. CONNOLLY: They could have tried 13 14 to, but they didn't and -- and probably because 15 it's not an actual emergency to have to forego 16 notice-and-comment in negotiated rulemaking. 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, 18 counsel. 19 MR. CONNOLLY: Thank you. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Oh, wait --20 21 MR. CONNOLLY: Yeah. 2.2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry, I 23 didn't mean to cut you off too quickly. I'm 24 sorry. 25 Justice Thomas, do you have anything?

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1	Justice Alito?
2	Justice Kavanaugh?
3	JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: No.
4	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No?
5	Justice Barrett?
6	Justice Jackson?
7	See? Okay.
8	(Laughter.)
9	MR. CONNOLLY: Thank you.
10	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you very
11	much.
12	General Prelogar?
13	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. ELIZABETH B. PRELOGAR
14	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
15	GENERAL PRELOGAR: Thank you, Mr.
16	Chief Justice.
17	I want to begin with standing again.
18	My friend was asked several times whether he has
19	a case to support this novel theory of standing.
20	He referred to Lujan and Summers. Those cases
21	don't support the theory he's advancing here.
22	In every case where there has been an
23	asserted procedural injury, the plaintiff was
24	asking the the for the agency to
25	reconsider its decision under the very statutory

1 authority at issue.

2	He's not been able to identify any
3	precedent where, instead, a plaintiff is able to
4	say, I acknowledge I can't get any relief under
5	the particular agency action at issue. Instead,
6	I'm hoping for some kind of bank shot where, if
7	I can hold up the agency in this one area, maybe
8	they'll take a different action under a
9	different statute that will down the road
10	provide me some kind of benefit. And that would
11	be an extraordinary expansion of Article III
12	injury in the context of procedural injuries in
13	particular.
14	He was asked whether he had a limiting
15	principle and he suggested, well, you have to
16	have a general interest or stake in the subject
17	matter of the dispute. But I don't see how that
18	limits it at all.
19	Go back to the cases he cited which
20	involved environmental plaintiffs, and imagine a
21	scenario where you have an environmental
22	plaintiff who is interested in pollution, and
23	the agency has decided to regulate water
24	pollution.
25	Now that plaintiff doesn't actually

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have a stake in water pollution, isn't harmed by it, but the plaintiff thinks that if it can hold up the agency from regulating water pollution, maybe the next priority or goal will be to go after air pollution.

I think that if a plaintiff came to 6 7 court and pressed that kind of claim, it would be clear that it is far too attenuated and can't 8 9 possibly supply a basis to allow this universe of plaintiffs to newly assert these kinds of 10 11 procedural injuries or substantive injuries with 12 respect to agency decisions that have not been 13 made.

He said that they have a concrete interest in trying to have their debts forgiven. If that were their interest, there were several straightforward mechanisms to try to vindicate it here.

19 They could have challenged this plan 20 as being arbitrary and capricious on substantive 21 grounds to say you should expand the plan to 22 include us, or if for some reason they really 23 wanted to have this under the Education Act, 24 they could have gone to the Secretary and filed 25 a petition for rulemaking and said give us

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relief under the Education Act.

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2 But, instead, their argument here is 3 that the Secretary can't provide debt relief. That is a really anomalous way to try to 4 vindicate an interest that they claim they have 5 6 in loan forgiveness. 7 I've been thinking of it effectively as this Rube Goldberg theory of standing where 8 9 instead of taking the most direct route, you've set up this complicated route to try to get what 10 11 you want, all in service of being able to 12 smuggle in a substantive challenge to the HEROES Act for borrowers who are not hurt one bit by 13 the Secretary's decision to grant relief under 14 15 that Act. 16 Finally, I want to respond to his 17 suggestion that instead the Secretary should 18 have proceeded under the Higher Education Act 19 here. 20 I would think that at the very least, 21 if they were going to ask this Court to 2.2 recognize a cognizable Article III injury on 23 that basis, it would be incumbent on them to 24 explain their wholly unexplained position of why 25 they think the Secretary could do this under the

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1 Higher Education Act.

2	My friend has suggested that that's
3	what this program was actually designed to do.
4	But this is a pandemic-related program. It
5	specifically focuses on the national emergency
6	circumstances that have had profound financial
7	effects on student-loan borrowers. And the
8	Secretary acted to try to mitigate those
9	financial harms from COVID.
10	That's what the HEROES Act was made
11	for. It is a perfect fit for this kind of
12	circumstance, and it explains why the Secretary
13	chose to provide this relief to those who were
14	harmed by COVID, just as the forbearance policy
15	was put into place right at the start of the
16	pandemic similarly on those COVID concerns.
17	And then, finally, I I know that we
18	have had hours today on the legal issues in this
19	case, but I do want to step back for a moment
20	and focus on the stakes of this case for the
21	tens of millions of student-loan borrowers in
22	this country who have had devastating financial
23	impacts based on this unprecedented pandemic.
24	Over the past three years, they have
25	benefited from the critical relief of the

1 forbearance policy. That's an unprecedented
2 form of relief, but it was very much needed in
3 this circumstance to ensure that we did not see
4 a deluge of default and delinquency on student
5 loan debt.

6 And it's undisputed, my friends have 7 not disputed that when that forbearance policy 8 ends, and it can't continue indefinitely, once 9 it ends, there are going to be millions of 10 borrowers who are in a worse position because of 11 COVID with respect to their ability to repay 12 their loans.

Ninety percent of the borrowers covered by this plan make less than \$75,000 a year, and the Secretary documented the extreme impacts that COVID had had on their financial affairs.

Already, 26 million people have applied for this relief, and 16 million people have been approved to receive it. For those Americans, this is a critical lifeline to ensure that they are not subject to the severe negative consequences of delinquency and default on student loan debt.

25 And the relief for these Americans has

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1	been held up by two student-loan borrowers who
2	don't even have standing and whose claims fail
3	on the merits. So we'd urge you to reject their
4	claims.
5	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
6	General, Mr. Connolly. The case is submitted.
7	(Whereupon, at 1:37 p.m., the case was
8	submitted.)
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