My name is Amber Haye. Uh I am the PSLF advocate here at the Washington State Office of the Student Loan Advocate. Um I'm joined today by Terry and Jessica. Terry, if you wouldn't mind doing a quick introduction. I am Terry Parker. I work in the office of financial management uh state human resources division and I serve as the public service loan forgiveness policy and performance analyst. Jessica.

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for being here with us today. My name is Jessica Manfrey and I am the student loan advocate within the Washington Student Achievement Council. And I'll go ahead and pass it back to Amber.

All right. So, um, today we're going to be reviewing the public service loan forgiveness program. Um what started out as kind of a simple idea of easing the student loan burden for those who dedicate 10 years of their lives to working in public service has expanded into a very complex program that we have today. So our goal is to demystify the program and um really provide you today with a comprehensive overview of all of its elements to help you attain PSLF. And so we recognize folks are in different um uh stages of their process in PSLF. So, we're doing a broad, very comprehensive overview today. Just a quick uh few presentation reminders. This presentation is being recorded, will be posted onto our website, the student loan advocate website, uh as well as the slides and transcript. Um and we will email out all of these materials to you, including the video, uh within a week. Um so, do look out for that. Um note that participants are on mute. Um, and uh, we are not using the chat function. So, make sure if you have questions, you put them in the Q&A function. Um, keep that Q&A function open. Um, read questions as they go and, um, upvote questions that you also have if someone else posts a question so that way we can try to prioritize those questions at the end of the presentation. Um, we might have a smaller period of time today for questions, but we will get through as many as we can. Uh, and if you need uh or want live closed captions, you can enable that on your Zoom icons.

Some general disclaimers uh before we move into the rest of the presentation. First, know that every effort has been made to ensure that this presentation is as accurate as possible, but we know that this information um is subject to change and may likely change in the future. Um, so please check the Department of Education's Federal Student Aid website for the most current up-to-date information on PSLF and related student loan topics. We know that there's a lot of uncertainty right now with a lot of changes happening at the federal level and that that's causing a lot of anxiety. Please know we're feeling that same stress and

unfortunately we don't have all the answers. So there are outstanding questions that we're still waiting to learn more about and we just don't know how long we'll need to wait. We're living in unprecedented times. So, know that we continue to do what we can to advocate for Washington state borrowers. Um, Terry, Jessica, and myself, thank you in advance for your understanding and patient throughout uh patience throughout today's presentation. Um, our office, the Office of the Student Loan Advocate cannot tell you what to do in your situation. We can only provide information and education to help you make informed decisions.

So, in addition to the overview, we're going to cover how to qualify and apply for the PSLF program, as well how to as how to track your progress. We will dive into some of the federal changes and how it's impacting folks pursuing PSLF. And we're also going to do a review of the PSLF buyback process. Um, and finally, of course, we'll give you some resources and information about how to get some individual support that will help you in pursuing forgiveness.

So, what exactly is PSLF? Um, started in 2007. It was a bipartisan um supported bill signed into law under President Bush. Um, because it was signed into law by Congress, it would take congressional action or a Supreme Court decision to dismantle the program. Um so in the program itself, the public service loan forgiveness program is a federal program that requ uh that forgives the remaining balance on your direct loans after you have made 120 qualifying monthly payments, which is approximately 10 years under qualifying repayment plan while working full-time for an eligible public uh service employer. Um and I do want to note that forgiveness under PSLF is not taxable federally. Um just for your information. Um, and with that, I'm going to pass it over to Terry to start our deep dive.

Terry, you're muted.

Thank you. So, all right, let's go ahead and first we're going to talk about um how folks can qualify. What are the criteria to have loans uh forgiven under the PSLF program? There are four elements, four criteria. First is the right type of employment. You have to have the right type of loan. You have to have the right type of repayment plan. And you have to have the right number of payments. So let's start with element or criteria number one, eligible employment. So this slide um shares the Department of Education's definition of eligible

employment and you do need to be directly employed by a qualifying public service employer and that um you know is defined by you know they pay you, you get your check from them, they provide your W2 statement. Um so just real quick, it is any level of government within the United States. So that includes federal um including the US military, state, local or tribal any um nonprofit organization with 501c3 tax designation. Other nonprofit organizations that provide qualifying public services and those are very much on a case- by case basis. So, uh, please be prepared to dig into that with your employer if you're working for a different kind of nonprofit employer. Um, full-time volunteer for Americaore or Peace Corps. And some contract work done for a qualifying employer may also be eligible. Um, in short, state law has to prevent that employer from directly hiring folks to do that work. and eligibility is determined on a case-bycase uh basis for by that employer. Next slide.

Department of education has also stated which organizations are not eligible. So these are for-profit organizations and that includes working for um a for-profit contracted organization. So again, remember that contract status is on a case- by case basis. Um, work for a labor union does not qualify. However, not to be confused, if you work in a public service position that is covered by a labor organization, you're part of a collective bargaining agreement, um, that is still eligible and work for partisan political organizations is not eligible.

The next element in qualifying employment is full-time employment and um so this um these are the highle criteria and try to be um succinct about this but I do want to note on these slides there's a link to the department of education's pages that give a lot of detail about this information. So, your employment needs to be at least 30 hours per week on average, and this can be with either one employer or multiple employers. It does include paid time off and leave taken under the Family Medical Leave Act. It also includes contractual um or employment like contractual periods or employment periods of at least 8 months in a year. that is considered to be equivalent to one um full-time like a full-time job. And so an example of that is working as a a teacher in a K through 12 um school where you know you're you're teaching for 9 months and then you have um 3 months off. Um let's see. higher education. Um for nontenured track um faculty there is a calculation where um the credit hours that you're teaching are divided by the contractual hours taught per week or it's the sorry I didn't say that well the credit hours or the contractual hours that you teach per week are multiplied by 3.35 to determine that average number of hours per week. So there are tools that um are there for you to help you understand these um criteria but also

good tools for employers. And so um our team can help um guide employers to those tools and provide some guidance about that.

Okay, I think that covers that slide. The last and maybe most important tip that I want to offer to you regarding the right type of employment is to know please that you need to be employed full-time by a qualifying employer at the point where you are applying for loan discharge. We'll go into that in detail later, but I don't think we can hit this point often enough. It's the most important thing to know. do not retire before you've sent submitted your last PSLF um certification form and made your last qualifying payment. Um uh that is that is a really important tip for you to know. Now Amber is going to talk about the second second element um which is the student loans that qualify for PSLF.

Thanks Terry. Um, and before I go into that, um, I do want to address, uh, you may have heard or seen in the news that the Department of Education recently published a new PSLF rule that would give them the ability to remove an employer's eligibility for PSLF uh, based on actions that they may that they believe may have an illegal purpose. Um, today we're not going to cover all of the details of this new rule because even though it's scheduled to go into effect July 1, 2026, there are already three separate lawsuits challenging the rule. Um, these lawsuits may prevent the rule from ever going into effect. So, we don't know um if the rule will actually be implemented. Washington state actually joined 21 other state attorneys generals in a fi in filing one of the lawsuits. If you um have heard about this uh rule change and you're thinking about changing employers based on the rule, um the attorney general's office here in Washington would like to hear from you. They've got a form for folks to share their information. Um we've provided a link to this form on the slide and actually Jessica is going to drop it into the chat. Um this is just if you want to share your information um uh in case the the attorney general's office wants to reach out. Do not expect a response and be aware that your information may or may not be used. We understand that there may be a lot of anxiety and uncertainty about this rule in particular and its possible impacts if it were to go into effect. Right now, nothing has changed with regards to current employer eligibility. And we don't know that it will because of those lawsuits. What we can say is that if the rule were to go into effect, no employment prior to July 1, 2026 would be impacted and employers would be notified in the future if they're at risk or lose eligibility. Um, so hope that gives you a little bit of peace of mind right now.

With that said, let's cover which federal loans are eligible for forgiveness through PSLF. Um, only direct loans from the Department of Education are eligible for PSLF. These include the direct subsidized, direct unsubsidized, direct grad plus, direct consolidation loans, and parent plus loans. Parent plus loans though are unique in the fact that they um are eligible for PSLF, but they aren't eligible for any of the income driven repayment plans. Um, so to really truly access PSLF, parent plus borrowers need to consolidate their loans. We are going to spend some time uh specifically on parent plus loans throughout this presentation. So stay tuned.

Here we have a list of loans that are not eligible. That's again not eligible for PSLF unless they are consolidated into a direct consolidation loan. These loans include all types of the federal family education loans or FEL loans uh as well as Perkins loans. um these loans uh for FEL stopped being issued in about 2010 and Perkins loans stopped in about 2017. Um so but we know that there are folks that still have them. So the loans can become eligible for PSLF through consolidation. However, we want folks to know that if you consolidate a loan that already has qualifying payments towards PSLF with another loan, that new direct consolidation loan will receive a credit of a weighted average of the qualifying payments. Um, so ultimately what that means is that it's critical critical to certify all employment for PSLF before doing a consolidation to ensure an accurate weighted average of counts is applied to that new loan. Um, this weight of a weighted average rule applies to consolidations that are completed um or have were completed September 1, 2024 and onward.

If you're not sure what type of loans you have, please, please, please verify that information using your federal student aid account at studentaid.gov. This is where you'll find information about your loans, including your type of loan, your loan balance, and your student loan serer. Here on this slide, we've got a screenshot that shows where the link is to log into your account. Uh, it'll ask for your federal student aid ID or FSA ID, which is your username and password. Um, if you don't have an account yet, um, or it's been a number of years, click on that create an account button. Uh, you can find a lot of the information that you need related to your student loans by exploring the elements on your dashboard. We encourage you to investigate and learn all you can about your loans. If you need to consolidate your loans, you can complete the consolidation application on your studentaid.gov account, as well as other forms that you may need. Um, now Jessica is going to go ahead and review repayment plans, uh, including some of the recent changes that I'm sure you've heard of.

Perfect. Thank you so much, Amber. And I just want to let folks know that, um, while Ember and Terry were speaking, I have been working on answering some of the questions in the chat. Um, just so you know, a lot of the questions that are coming in are questions that we're going to address during the presentation. So, we haven't talked about it yet. Likely, we're going to talk about it. So, just hang on tight. Um so um now that we have talked about uh the right type of employment and the right type of loans that you have, the next the next thing that we want to make sure is that you are on the right type of repayment plan. But before we go over talking about repayment plans, I did want to take a pause to answer a question that was actually asked in the chat that a lot of you may have about the saving on a valuable education, the save plan, right? You may have heard on the news that SAVE is currently blocked from operating due to an ongoing court case that is challenging that plan. And as a result, all of the borrowers that are enrolled in SAVE are currently in a forbbearance. And interest began occurring on August 1st for anyone that is still in in that forbbearance um by either being enrolled in SAVE or because they applied and were waiting to be enrolled in save. It's also important for you to know that PSLF both PSLF and R credit is not being granted for any time that you spend on the safe forbearance after July of 2024.

So if you're still under that save forbearance, again this question was asked in the chat. Um, you may be asking yourself, should I get out of save and apply for another income driven repayment plan? Right? First, I want to mention that this is a personal decision and there is no universal right answer. With that in mind, here are some things that you want to consider as you make that decision. So, you should consider getting out of save if you want to continue receiving PSLF credit, right? So you don't want to delay forgiveness. You want to keep acuring those PSLF credits so that hopefully you get your for your 120 qualifying payments as soon as possible. You want to receive IDR credits. Again, this is specifically for people that may be uh working for income driven repayment forgiveness or people that maybe are working on both PSLF and IDR forgiveness at the same time, which we know some folks that might be in that situation or um if you are close to that PSLF or IDR forgiveness, right, you also might want to switch out of that safe plan. Now, you should consider sticking staying in the safe plan if you would benefit from not having to make a payment. So, maybe your current financial situation really doesn't allow you to make a payment and you just want to wait and see uh what happens with SAVE, then you could stay in that um in that uh forbearance. You don't mind not receiving those IBR credits um or PSLF credits, right? you don't mind that your forgiveness is going to potentially be delayed

uh by the fact that you're staying in this forbearance and again you don't mind occurring interest because like I mentioned since um uh August of this year interest has begun occurring for everybody that's in that administrative forbearance.

Now that we have covered what is happening to the SAFE plan and what options you have if you're still on that forbearance and trying to figure out what to do, we're going to move on to talk about which repayment plans are eligible for PSLF. Now, this used to be a lot simpler um a couple of months ago earlier in the year. However, uh due to the reconciliation bill that passed earlier this year, the repayment plans that are eligible for PSLF will change depending on specific dates that are outlined on the bill and also when you took out your loans, right? So, we have tried to break down this section based on relevant dates uh so that folks can know what their options are. So before July 1st of 2026, so right now prior to July 1st of 2026, the following income driven repayment plans are eligible for PSLF. The incomebased repayment plan or IBR, the pay as you earn, the pay plan, and the income contingent repayment plan or ICR, and also the 10-year standard repayment plan uh is also eligible for PSLF. This is the plan that if you graduate um and you don't select another plan, this is the plan that you automatically get placed into. You typically do not want to repay your loan under the 10-year standard repayment plan because you will basically pay off your entire loan balance before you actually become eligible for forgiveness under PSLF. So some periods under this plan are okay as long as you also have some periods under indent in either an income driven repayment plan or some eligible periods of forbbearances and deferments.

Now, starting July 1st of 2026, however, your options for incomedriven repayment will change, right? Again, because of that bill, you still have access to the income driven repayment plans that I mentioned on the previous slide with some limitations. And you will also have access to a new R plan. So on July 1st of 2026, you will have access to the IBR plan, the pay plan, the ICR plan. However, for pay and ICR, you will no longer be able to enroll into this plan. Right? So if you really are hoping to enroll into pay and ICR, you must do so before the July 1st of 2026 date. Um, and in addition, um, IBR pay and ICR plans, right, these plans will only remain available to borrowers that only took out loans before July 1st of 2026. So, as a new borrower, you will no longer have access to these repayment plans. Um, if you take out any loans or you consolidate your loans on or after July 1st of 2026, the only IDR plan that you're going to have access to is the repayment assistance plan or RAP. RAP will also be open to any borrowers with direct loans. So, like the older borrowers, right? Except for parent plus loans. But please note that WAP is typically not as

generous as the older incomedriven repayment options for most borrowers. And once again, the 10-year standard repayment plan will continue being eligible for PSLF. Though, like I explained, not the best option long term for most borrowers.

Finally, when we get to July 1st of 2028, which I know is a long time from now, um, but you know, you might want to be aware of some of these things, uh, so you can make your decisions. Um at this point in time uh we will have just two income driven repayment plans available. First the incomebased repayment plan or IBR plan. Um however this plan will on once again have some limitations as IBR will only remain available for borrowers who only took out loans prior to that July 1st of 2026 date. IBR will also no longer be available for new enrollments starting July 1st of 2028. Right? So, if you want to get into IBR, you want to make sure that you get into it before July 1st of 2028. Um, the other ID plan that is going to remain available once again to all borrowers with direct loans except for parent plus loans is the repayment assistance plan, the RAP plan. um which once again typically not as generous um as the other IDR plan for most borrowers. So again, if you're thinking about switching into a another repayment plan at this point in time, uh just keep in mind that, you know, if you got to this July 1 of 2028 date and you haven't opted in into any of these options and you're not currently enrolled into an income driven repayment plan, RAP will just be your only option, right? And again, if you're wondering what is going to happen to the people that are still in pay or ICR by July 1st of 2028, if you don't apply or enroll into the incomebased repayment plan before that date, you're going to be automatically enrolled into the RAP plan whether you know whether you like it or not. So you you want to make a decision if you wanted to eventually go into IBR, do so before this July 1st of 2028 date. And once again, the 10-year standard repayment plan will continue being eligible for PSLF.

And here is a recap on the upcoming changes that I just talked about, right, for IDR, um, which is the plan that most people that are going to qualify for PSLF enroll in, right, to benefit from the program. And I'm not going to go over this information on the slide again because I just provided you all this information. I just have it here so that you can reference it later. Um, if you just want a quick reference of the biggest changes that are going to happen that are going to impact uh the choices you have for income driven repayment.

All right. So, now we're going to move on to talk about the repayment plans that are ineligible for PSLF. Right. So, the 15, 20, or 25 year standard repayment plans, which are going to be available for new loans after July 1st of 2026, the 30-year standard repayment

plan, which is available for currently available for consolidated loans, and the graduated and extended repayment plans. So, any of the repayment plans that are listed on the slide do not count towards PSLF. So, if you're in one of these plans, you wanted to switch to one of the plans that we discussed earlier.

Now, you can apply um to enroll into an income driven repayment plan or switch to another income different repayment plan using the application on the studentaid.gov website. Um you will have to log in, right, in order to apply and you can also submit a manual uh so like a paper or a PDF application. um of of the of IDR directly to your servicesers website. When you're evaluating the R plans that you are thinking about um either switching to or enrolling into for PSLF, usually the lowest monthly payment available under one of these IDR plans is going to maximize the forgiveness that you get at the end with PSLF. Um, please note that the WAP plan, uh, which is going to become available likely after July 1st of 2026, is not currently available on the IDR application. Uh, and we don't really know when that's going to be available. So, just keep that in mind, um, as you're reviewing your options. And for most people, uh, we highly recommend that you submit the IDR application online on the studentame.gov website. Uh we also recommend that on the application you use the IRS data retrieval tool to give the Department of Education access to your tax information. This allow for one for faster processing and two for you to get more accurate estimates of your monthly payments under the application. Um and speaking of processing, you may be aware that there's still a significant backlog of IDR applications. Um many folks have been waiting several months for processing of manually submitted IDR applications um from when the online application was not available um earlier this year. So what we recommend borrowers in that situation is to once again submit a new application on the student a.gov website and using that data retrieval tool. Right? Doing those two things will hopefully allow for your um your application to be faster processed faster.

We also wanted to highlight for people that the partial financial hardship requirement that was once needed to enroll into what's the income based repayment plan or IBR plan has now been removed. So what does that mean? Right? That means that any borrower that currently has a direct loan except for parent plus loans now qualifies for the IBR plan. Right? However, the online application may not show you the option to apply for IBR if you don't meet the partial financial hardship requirement. Right? So if you are in that situation and you want to renew into IBR, this is going to be one of the few cases where we recommend that you actually submit a paper or a manual application um to your serer

directly to only to that IBR if it's not showing to you as an option under the online application.

Finally, we want to address uh parent plus loans. Um it's important for you to be aware that you have to take action in order to remain eligible for incomedriven repayment if you still have parent plus loans. Right? So you will need to either consolidate your parent plus loans as soon as possible if you want to enroll them in an income driven repayment plan. If you already consolidated your parent plus loans then you you've already completed the step, right? This is this tab to consolidate the loans is for people that just have parent plus loans at this point in time. Now, after you consolidate, so even people that have already consolidated, uh you also want to go ahead and apply to enroll into the income contingent repayment plan, the ICR plan before July 1st of 2026. And for people that need to either consolidate or apply for ICR or both, we encourage those borrowers to act now to leave plenty of time for those consolidations and IDR applications to be processed well ahead of that July 1st, 2026 date. Um, and if you consolidate and apply for ICR, if your consolidation loans contains PAR plus loans, you will eventually be introdition to the incomebased repayment plan, the IBR plan by that July 1st, 2028 date. So even though you currently cannot enroll into IBR, right, you will eventually transition into the IBR plan if you take the step to consolidate and apply for ICRs.

As a parent plus borrowers, we have a few more things that we have to tell you. So it's important for you to know that you will not have access to any income based repayment plans after July 1st of 2026. till next year on July 1st of 226 if you do not take if if you if you do take out any federal student loans after that July 1st 2026 date right so if you're currently taking out loans for uh a student for example and you're still going to need to take out those loans next year by the fact that you're taking out those those loans next year you're basically going to give up your ability to sign up right for for an income driven repayment plan Um and also if you have current prior plus loans but you don't you not taking out any more loans if you don't take that act of consolidating and enrolling into ICR uh prior to the July 1st 2026 date you will also not be able to access any income driven repayment plans right um so in practice what does this mean right for people that are under these two uh buckets that we just explained it means that borrowers that are in these situations will unlike are going to be unlikely to qualify for PSLF due to basically not being able to enroll into an income driven repayment plan. And now I will pass it over to Terry.

First, I want to do a quick recap. We've gone over three of our four elements to qualify for PSLF. So, the first one, say them to yourself, the right kind of employment. Next is the right type of loan. Third is the right type of repayment plan. And Jessica has given us all our homework about how to go investigate that. So now we're going to cover the last part which is making 120 qualifying payments on the loan.

So these 120 payments represent about 10 years. uh they must have started after October 1, probably on or after October 1 of 2027. They have to be made while you are um under a qualifying repayment plan and they and you have to pay the full amount due as shown on your bill. This includes $0 payments for those who qualify for it that under an income driven repayment plan. Just making the note if there's a zero payment then and Jessica uh correct me if I'm wrong but if if the balance is zero then there's nothing you need to be paying but that's still a qualifying payment. The only time these two rules don't apply is if you're under one of the accepted types of deferments or forbearances at any time during that month. Payments also need to be made um after October 1st, 2007 because that is when the PSLF program started. The payments do not need to be made consecutively or with the same student loan serer or while you work at the same employer. All of those things could change. Um the qualifying criteria is that you have made 120 qualifying payments over a period of 10 years. Again, it could be spread out if you came in and out of qualifying employment status or something. Um but you just need to be working for that that 10 years of qualifying u with a qualifying public service employer. One tip is to make sure that you are making on time and complete payments. um and um that you a tip for ensuring that you do this is to sign up for automatic um payments with your loan serer. Sorry, stumbled over that. All right, it's important to keep in mind that there are times when you cannot make qualifying payments. You can only make qualifying monthly payments during the periods when you have a payment due. Uh this means that you can't make a qualifying payment if you have inschool status, you are in your grace period and again in certain types of deferments or forbbearances. Any payments made during those periods would not be considered as qualifying for PSLF. In some cases, you can decline inschool deferment for previous loans, but they're only under certain circumstances. If you return to school, for example, to get a master's degree, you can decline the inschool deferment for your undergraduate loans to um in order to continue making payments on those loans. However, you would not be able to decline your inschool deferment for the new loans that you receive for your graduate education. Here's a list of qualifying deferments and forbearances that do count towards PSLF. Um, and again, they um they can count as qualifying payments if you are employed an average of 30 hours per week with a qualifying one or more qualifying employers during that period. Most of these are self-explanatory like cancer

treatment, economic hardship, deferment or military service. Others are a little less known like administrative forbearance due to a local or national emergency or administrative forbearance for collecting supporting documentation from the borrower. This would be the servicesers collecting um documentation from you as the borrower such as when you apply for an income driven repayment plan. All of these types of deference and forbearances count as qualifying payments even though you're technically not making any payments during these periods. And just to iterate again, save forbbearance does not qualify for PSLF. Even if you were to make a voluntary payment during the save forbearance, that month won't count for PSLF credit.

All right. Now, let's talk about how to apply um for PSLF credit and track your process progress. This slide links to the PSLF help tool tool on the studentaid.gov website. Key pieces of information you will need are your employer's federal identification number or EIN, which is available on your W2 statement, your dates of employment, and your employer's PSLF contact email address. If you have worked for um hold on a second. Oh, if you if your employment includes work with a Washington state agency or a public institution of higher education, you can use the PSLF directory which is linked on this page in the second bullet to find that information for your qualifying employer. Um, office of insurance commissioner has their EIN and Okay, I have a note there that I don't quite understand. Um, Amber, can you clarify? Does the office of the insurance commissioner is that a a particular I think we can skip that. Sorry for the blip, folks.

Not sure why we referenced that. Just maybe it's an example.

So, when you're ready to apply for PSLF, you use the PSLF help tool from your studentaid.gov account to generate and digitally sign your PSLF form. This form is then um sent to your employer and um using the docuign feature or program and this allows both you as the borrower and your employer to digitally sign the form. The tool then submits the form back to federal student aid. As soon as you submit the electronic form for signature, please email your HR department to notify them that they should be receiving a docu sign request. While that's not required, it's certainly helpful to the team that's going to be receiving the request. We have found that by doing this, the employer is more likely to complete the form in a timely manner and they won't miss the request coming through. So, in general, we see that there's about a 30-day window for an employer to complete the form, but um again, just helping your employer know that it's coming is a great option. A

paper form is available. U talked a little bit about manual forms previously, but um the uh Department of Education discourages use of that form unless it's absolutely necessary. um processing through the help tool prevents most common errors that people can make on the form. And another point to consider, if you're doing a manual form, you need to either fax it, mail it, um which can not be as good protection for your confidential information. Um and if you do use the um paper form, be sure that you upload it into your FSA account just so you know there's a record of it there. However, submitting the form via the help tool allows you to track the form while it processes on the federal student aid website. It's best practice to submit a form every year whenever you switch employment and whenever you switch between part-time and full-time employment with the same employer. Does a few things. One, it just makes sure all the periods are covered. it is okay to um submit the form even when you might not necessarily need to. It doesn't do anything with your credit. It just establishes that you've met all the criteria for that particular month. Um we strongly encourage that you do not wait to submit your form at the end of your 10-year period. There's a lot of pitfalls in that. Um you may have difficulty connecting with an employer. Um, there might also be something else that isn't exactly correct to receive credit, like the type of loan you had or the type of repayment plan you have. So, by submitting your form routinely, regularly, you can get a heads up about if there's any kind of blips under the radar.

So, this is the screenshot of um using the employer search tool in studentaid.gov. As you can see, it um asks you for your employer's EIN or um employer identification number. You have to have that. Um you also need to be able to note the employment period that that um you're going to be reporting for. Um once you click the submit button, you're going to um get a result. And so we'll move to the next slide to look at what those result options are. Hopefully you get a green eligible um button. You can see this in the upper right hand corner of the first um shot that's taken there. And um as long as that comes back as eligible, your form is going to be processed probably within I don't know five business days a week or so. There might possible for delays but probably not likely. However, there's also the possibility that you will get an ineligible result. In this case, we're showing what happened when someone tried to find the Washington Wine Commission. Their employer identification number was not included in the help tool at that point in time. So, now let's talk about what do you do if that happens.

So, again, eligible results. Once you find your employer, you'll continue clicking. We'll go through that a little bit more about how to actually complete the form, but um everything gets processed automatically. You have the ability to your employer will have an uh the

ability to keep a copy of the form they complete once it's all completed and and a copy will be put into your um studentaid.gov account and um then forwarded on to the loan processor um or yeah, the loan serer for processing. When there is an ineligible, undetermined, or not found result, you're going to have to do some extra work in order to submit that form and get PSL of credit. So, we also go out and do these presentations to employers. And so, we're going to tell you what what you know we've encouraged on both sides. You um can use your W2 statement as um supporting documentation. You can also use state or local statutes that establish the employer as um a government organization. you can um provide documentation of your organization's federal employer ID number or EIN and um then the form has to be reviewed by financial student aid for eligibility which does take a little while. Currently, there is no way for an employer to proactively enter or update their information in the employer search tool. And we just share this with you because um please don't give up. Just know it's going to take a little while for the form to get processed, but it will get processed. Once an employer has been reviewed and approved, then you're able to use the um electronic form and go ahead and do this um you know using the um docuign process and having it automatically processed. So when um I think that's just the most important thing. Please talk to your employer if you get one of those ineligible um undetermined or not found um responses so that they can help you get the paperwork together that you're going to need. All right. Now, next slide. Moving on. Amber will talk more about the application process.

Um okay. So, um, once your your PSLF help tool form like is submitted and processed, um, and an eligibility is determined, you'll be able to view eligible and qualifying PSLF payments on studentaid.gov. Uh, as well as access additional self-service tools and program dashboards. Um, note that you'll continue to make payments to your loan serer. So, you'll have both your student aid account and your student loan serer account. um when it comes to tracking your progress. So um this uh is your uh PSLF form through the help tool. This is uh a tracker. So once you actually complete the tool um and it submits it to your employer, this is what it'll look like when you go into the my activity section of your FSA account. Um and so it'll show you kind of where your form is at in the process. Um, and this is what will be where you can see um when it's actually been completed um if your employer has signed it or if you need to send a reminder. Um, the tool also has the ability to uh generate a manual form. Um, we generally don't recommend the manual forms except in very specific circumstances um because the the form just takes a lot longer to process if it's manual. So, um, if you do have to do a manual form, you can upload it and scan it back here. Um, and if you do that, make sure you include all pages of the files, not just the ones you have to fill out, but the instruction pages as well. There's some really finicky um, things.

So, again, if you can avoid doing the manual um, upload, that's going to be best is to do it, you know, through the docuign. Um, on this slide, we've linked to an FSA article on how to use all of these new PSLF features so that you can reference it later. I'm going to do a quick, um, overview of of what those tools look like, though. So, um, the PSLF progress tracker you can access, um, on your FSA account dashboard. Um, as indicated on the slide with the red box, uh, you need to click on that view details button in this section to see more information on the tracker. When you do that, um, you'll come to a screen that looks like this with the PSLF payments at the top and then several different tabs. Under the loan details tab, you'll see a qualifying payment bar for each of your loans if you have more than one. Um, if you have a consolidation loan, you you'll see a uh likely see an unsubsidized and a subsidized portion. Um, they show up as two different loans even though it's one direct consolidation loan. Um, when you're on this page, you can click on that show payment summary to see the specific payment counts for each loan. Um, including a breakdown of how many qualifying payments you have and maybe payments that still need employer certification if it's been a while since you've certified your employment. You can click over to the payment history tab, which is where you can learn more about previous payments. Uh you can filter these by the specific loans that you've had, um specific time periods, different um qualifying statuses. Um this section in particular is very helpful for folks um if they're trying to identify months that might be eligible for the PSLF buyback process, which I am going to get to in just a minute. Um so, uh take some time, explore, um you know, and kind of get a sense of of your payment history.

Finally, on the the PSLF progress tracker, there's an employment certification tab. This is where you can see all the employment you've previously certified, including their EIN, the hours that you worked, the period that was certified, um, all of that information. Um, we do recommend kind of just reviewing the information on the PSLF pro progress tracker regularly and especially after submitting a new PSLF form that certifies your employment.

Once your PSLF PSLF form is processed, you should receive a notice updating you about your PSLF qualifying payment count, you'll be able to view this correspondence letter under that my activity section of your FSA account. Um, it's a little hidden, but you'd get a an email that notifies you to check that area. Um, if you disagree with an updated qualifying payment account notice that you receive, um, you actually can submit a PSLF reconsideration request within 90 days of receiving that updated count. Um, and you would need to provide information and documentation to support your your request. So, um, for instance, if maybe they said a month wasn't qualifying, but you know that you made a

payment, you know, you could submit documentation of that payment to say, "Hey, I did have a payment due and here it is." Um, so we've linked information on the PSLF reconsideration on this slide for you to reference if needed. All right, PSLF buyback. I know I've seen a couple questions come in about the PSLF buyback program. Um, so, uh, let's dive in. PSLF buyback allows borrowers to get credit for previously, um, ineligible months that were in certain forbearance and deferment statuses. Um, and so, uh, we've linked to FSA's website on this slide for you to review the specific list of which forbearances and deferments are eligible for buyback. Um, so you'll want to check that web page for the full list. Um, note that the the um, forbearances and deferments that Terry covered earlier. Those are ones that you should already be getting credit for if you were in those um, while working for qualifying employers. Um, so those ones shouldn't be an issue, but you can look at the full list of what other ones um you can actually then buy back. Important to note, you cannot apply for PSLF buyback until you've reached 120 months of qualifying employment. Technically, you could submit an application before then, but it'll be rejected. Um, so but you're not actually eligible for that buyback until you've reached that 120 months of qualifying employment. And the easiest way to actually determine kind of when that point is is to figure out how many months that you have that are eligible for buyback um based on the criteria. You can then map out for when your monthly payments plus those months you want to buy back will equal your 120 months of uh qualifying employment. And so that also means that your employment needs to be certified for all of the periods that you want to buy back.

The amount that you would pay for buyback is dependent on what your payments likely would have been during the forbearance and deferment months. So, it's not the the payment amount that you currently have when you apply for buyback. It's based on um likely what your payments would have been during those those months you're trying to buy back. If you were on an R uh plan before or after those months, generally they'll use the lowest monthly payment amount. Um, if you weren't on an IDR plan during that time, you may need to provide additional tax information for those periods. Um, after submitting an application, borrowers are expected to continue making payments uh, if they have one due. If your, uh, application is then approved and you're eligible to buy back those months, you'll be set an agreement with the total amount, um, that you owe and the directions to make the payment within 90 days. Um, I do encourage folks to try and estimate their payments for those months uh in order to plan ahead for what amount might need to be paid during that time period. Um, uh, if you know you pay that amount, but you'd also made additional payments after submitting that application, if there's an over, um, payment, you would then

be refunded for an overpayment. So, um, it's a little little complicated, but um, you know, that's kind of the process in a nutshell.

From recent court filings, we know that there's a backlog of around 75,000 PSLF applications, PSLF buyback applications, excuse me. So, processing is taking quite a while. Um, we've heard from folks who submitted their PSLF buyback application maybe a year ago and are still waiting. Um, so with that said, we want to address the question of what to do if you're still in the save forbearance and waiting to hear about your PSLF buyback application. So, if you're in this boat, you have two options. One, you could do nothing and remain in the save forbearance while waiting for your PSLF buyback application to be processed. This could be good if uh you want a potentially lower payment amount based on your previous IDR eligibility for those months that you're buying back. Uh and if you don't mind waiting um for kind of an unknown amount of time for that the buyback to be processed. Um, your second option is to consider restarting payments by submitting an IDR application to get out of the save forbearance. This could be a really good option if you only need a small number of payments and might actually get for forgiveness faster um by just making those payments in those next few months rather than waiting that unknown amount of time. Um, and this is also good if you don't mind the possibility of maybe having higher monthly payments for those months um, compared to maybe the payments that you would have for the earlier months if you were to buy them back. So, um, you know, there's no right or wrong here. It's just, you know, what is best for your situation and your circumstances.

And Jessica's going to round us out here.

All right, folks. I know that we, you know, we we still have a little bit more to cover. Um, but we're we're getting towards the end here. So, uh, so now we're going to shift gears to talk about some important federal changes that are happening that are impacting PSLF. So the first one is the department of education has laid off and unfortunately continues laying off um around half of its workforce over the last several months. Uh which has led to longer wait times for borrower cases with the federal aid amendments office. Uh we are concerned that this staffing cuts may lead to less ser accountability and as a result delay uh processes that hurt borrowers. Um, this is likely going to impact reconsideration requests and FS FSA feedback cases and complaint cases. The importance here is to continue being patient um because a lot of these cases require manual review and with the

shutdown plus these staff cuts, you know, things have been delayed even further. Um, the good news though is that the American Federation of Teachers Union, AFT, filed a class action lawsuit against the Trump administration back in September, uh, claiming that the Department of Education is unlawfully blocking student loan forgiveness for hundreds of thousands of borrowers across multiple programs, including uh, the PSLF program. And as a result of this lawsuit, last month, the department of um um you know, the department will be required to process all um backlogged applications in PSLF by applications. The department will also be required to file six monthly status reports with the court uh on the status of R and PSLF applications. Um hopefully what this means is that this additional oversight will lead to more timely processing of IDR in PSLF buyback applications in the coming months though this remains to be seen right so uh don't hold your breath uh hopefully it will mean that uh it will be processed faster u but we're we're not sure at this point in time so let's cross our fingers that this um helps them process this stuff faster now if you want um a comprehensive overview of some of the changes that happened to federal student loan uh due to the reconciliation bill that was passed this year uh that was also known as the one big beautiful bill. Uh you can watch uh our webinar on the topic understanding changes to federal student loans webinar to learn more about these changes um beyond the impacts to PSLF. Right? This is important important I would say very pertinent specifically for people that may be taking out new loans. um after July 1st of 2026. So, I'll just make a call out. If you are a borrower, uh you either are thinking about going back to school and taking out new loans or you're currently in school and will continue to be taking out loans, I recommend that you watch this webinar, uh because it will have some important and relevant information for you. Um and as we talked a little bit earlier, um there is, like I said, that current backlog. I just want to reiterate that for borrowers who may be considering um you know trying to do something to make this go faster, you really want to submit a new application in sudname.gov and use the IRS data retrieval tool for hopefully faster processing of those applications. And finally, because there there's going to be many changes to income driven repayment plans availability within the next few years, we rightly recommend that you care you carefully review your repayment options and strategy and you you know to to do that we recommend that you re-review slides 21 to to 29.

All right, we're almost done. Uh but I wanted to highlight um a few resources that we have uh through the office of the student loan advocate. First, our office um has some steps to apply for PSLF document which has step-by-step instructions on how you can apply for PSLF. This is a great document especially for those who are starting out from scratch when it comes to PSLF, but also for those who are already in the program and which make sure

that they don't miss anything. Uh we also have a a PSLF frequently asked questions document that is helpful um and some other helpful links and resources on our website. Um so check it out. Um and finally, if you have a very specific question about your case or your situation or maybe you would like to submit a complaint um about your student loan serer, please complete our complaint/quests form available at studentaid studentcomplaints.wa.gov. I'm going to have Amber uh share this link uh in the chat here. Um you want to make sure that when you complete this form that you select select the student loan questions and complaints form. But please note that it's currently taking us six to eight weeks to respond to borrowers to submit questions or complaints due to the demand right that we're getting. And then finally, um, we will share a link to the student loan advocate PSLF web page in the chat where you can access the resources that we're talking about here. All right, we're on this last slide. So, thank you so much for the opportunity to present to you today. We're going to move on into the Q&A session in just a little bit here. Um, however, before we do that, I do want uh to ask that before the end of, you know, before the end of the day day today, if you're able to, please fill out a survey uh to help us continue providing resources for uh Washington student loan borrowers like you. Once again, we're going to provide that link in the chat. uh it shouldn't take a long time but your feedback really helps us shape the content that's available in these slides and I mean in this presentation and also the types of presentations that we make available to you. Um so once again thank you for your opportunity today and then I will pass it over to Amber so that we can start our Q&A section. Thanks Jessica and I'm going to go ahead and stop sharing just so I can see Zoom all the way. Um, all right. And this is the opportunity um in the uh Q&A section if you are looking through the questions, making sure to click the little thumbs up to upvote those questions. We're going to try to get through as many as we can. Um, both looking at um the most upv voted as well as ones that we think um are really important for folks to know um or that might apply to to many different folks. Um Jessica, do you mind taking the first question? And I need to pull up the um uh survey link to drop in the chat here. Of course. So, can you briefly chat about the benefits of filing taxes? Filing taxes married but separately. If my wife and I have significant different incomes, and I have quite a bit of student loans, looking to weigh the pros and cons, the student loan calculator shows my monthly payment would be vastly lower. currently in forbbearance and would like to get started again because I don't trust buyback and if I could start back up with much lower payments that would be good. So anonymous attendee I think you already you already answered your own question. So, the main benefit um of filing taxes separately if you're married and you're making student loan payments is that basically your spouse's income will not be taken into consideration when they're calculating your monthly payments. Right? So, for people in a situation like you where your income is significantly lower than your spouse's income, it means that you will likely have a lower monthly

payment under an income driven repayment plan as a result. Now, what I can't answer for you is what are the tax impacts of you making that choice, right? Um, when you file your taxes together, there are several benefits that you you might be able to take advantage of in in tax cuts and things of that nature that if you choose to file separately, you might lose. Um, so my recommendation for anybody in this situation is really to talk to a tax professional to understand what the implications are going to be if you choose to file your taxes separately because our office cannot answer that for you. And um, you really want to know what that's going to be before you make that decision, right? Because for some people, the amount of taxes that they uh the tax cuts and and and benefits that they get for filing it together outweighed the benefit of having a lower payment, right? But again, I would recommend if you're in the situation to consult a t a tax professional.

Great. Thanks, Jessica. I'll take the next question here. So, um Randy asks, "Will months on administrative forbearance due to being on the SAVE plan be eligible for PSLF buyback program?" Um, I've applied for an IDR multiple times and have not been switched off of SAVE. Uh, made a complaint to FSA and they responded but didn't help. So, um, I'll actually address kind of both parts of these. So, um, one, um, if you have switched if you've applied for R previously, um, uh, and I'm thinking if if your last application was prior to May of this year, it would be worth submitting a new application again and authorizing that um, IRS retrieval tool. That authorization of that tool is what's going to likely lead to faster processing. If you don't authorize that tool, you're likely going to get put in a line of manual processing, which is what that backlog is, is of the um uh applications that need to be manually reviewed by the servicesers um due to the time period that the online application was down essentially. Now, um months that were in the save forbearance, right? So there's a difference between like when you were on the save plan and making payments, those months should already be counting towards PSLF as long as you're employment certified. The months that are on the save forbearance, so going back to July of last year. So those months, they're not actively counting towards your PSLF payment count as Terry mentioned earlier in the presentation, but they are eligible currently for PSLF buyback. um that actually has been um explicitly um noted in court documents by the Department of Education that PSLF buyback um or that the say forbearance um time period is eligible for PSLF buyback. Um so we know that but again you can't apply for PSLF buyback until you reach that 120 months of qualifying employment. Hopefully that answers that question.

All right. Um, Irene asks, "I received a message. Mochila is no longer the serer for PSLF. They're no longer tracking it. It is being tracked at studentaid.gov. Are there any implications

of this or is it just the housing of that information?" Um, that's pretty much exactly right. So, the PSLF um tools in your studentaid.gov, that's how you're tracking your progress towards PSLF, right? It's all those tools that we um reviewed earlier. Um you still make your payments to your serer. Um you know, if you were with Mahila, you're still likely with Moila. Um they're just they don't have anything to do directly with PSLF anymore. Um they just take your payment essentially and report that you've made that payment and that that payment would be eligible for PSLF. So um uh yeah. So it's it's not a big deal that Moilo is no longer the serer. just you're managing everything essentially for PSLF through your studentaid.gov account. And Jessica, yeah, if you want to take the next question.

Perfect. Um, is there any chance that the federal courts will make a ruling that time spent in the mandatory forbearance to save will count towards PSLF or if Congress changes, is it possible that Congress would pass a law that would count forbearance towards PSLF? Yale. Here's what I'm going to tell you. It's possible, but I, you know, my personal assessment is that both of these things are unlikely, right? So, don't count on them. Make decisions based on the current situation and your current options. And assume that neither of these things are going to come to pass. We don't know. And there's no, unfortunately, crystal ball that we can look into to to give us that information. So make your decision about staying save or the time spent in save based on the current options. If for some reason in the future this comes to pass, we can all celebrate. But again, don't count on it is basically what my recommendation to you.

All right. Are there uh anticipated to be any class action lawsuits against the Department of Education for all of these changes? Um that's a great question. I would say the honest answer is is maybe. We don't know. Um our office is not um party to any lawsuits or or has the ability to be party. So um but that we know that there are advocates that are um already right pursuing avenues to um challenge some of the rules that are being made. Um so I mean we don't have a crystal ball unfortunately to know what's going to happen in the future. So maybe

all right and before we go to the next question uh Terry do you have any questions that that may be good for us to answer that maybe are not getting as many up votes? No, I I only had two really and you've already answered them. Okay, perfect. Thank you. All right, then I'm again make sure that you're up voting because we're going to that's how we're primarily going to be answering these questions is in the order of up votes. It sounds like buyback

applications are taking over a year to process. Many people hear nothing during this time. If folks have less than 12 buyback eligible months, do you recommend they keep making payments past 120 then request a refund later? So

if you So that's why this this question is a little tricky, right? Because you're not going to be making over 120 qualifying payments if you have not made 120 qualifying payments, right? I know that that that that sounds a little confusing, but if right now your payment tracker says that you have 115 qualifying payments and you need five additional payments, right? And you make those five additional payments, that's at the point that you're going to have 120 qualifying payments, right? Uh you can request a refund because technically no extra payments were made for you to actually be able to get that forgiveness. Um the what you're talking about is if you have a pending buyback application, could you somehow request a refund after you've received forgiveness um for those buyback months? The answer is no, right? Um you're not going to be able to request a refund for that money. Um, so if you want if you choose to start making payments to get to 120 qualifying payments, just know that you're not going to be eligible for a refund uh for payments past 120 months of eligible payments, right? Because I think that's what you're getting confused. There's 120 months of eligible qualifying work and 120 months of qualifying payments, right? So you could have 150 eligible qualifying months. You still have to make of of employment. You still have to make 120 qualifying payments to be able to be eligible. Right? So that's the the difference here. And in your situation, no, you wouldn't be able to request a refund is what you need to know. I will add to that, Jessica, because there's a little bit of nuance um in if So, if you put in your buyback request and you're trying to buy back eight months, right, and let's say um actually, no, that's not a good example. There there's a possibility of an overpayment refund if you bought back months and then you bought back some months that you'd already kind of paid extra for for after the period. So, um

but I think that that's a very niche situation, right? It is. Yeah, it's there's Yeah, and it's not something that you would request. It would be essentially um based on when the department puts your effective date. So, if you made some payments and then you also bought back months, they'll date your effective date to when you reached 120. And if there were any payments after that, those would then um be eligible for But either way, it would require you to actually have a buyback application process. If you never have your buyback application processed and you just make those additional payments to get back to 120, you're not getting a refund, right? Right. Yes. Okay. Yeah. Um, yeah, you guys can see, right? This stuff is all complicated. So, thank you for asking the questions. Um, all right. So, our

next one is there any harm in remaining in the administrative forbearance instead of choosing a repayment plan apart from it not counting towards PSLF? Um I mean essentially that's the biggest downside is that you're not making payments towards PSLF um and that you are acrewing interest. Um the flip side to the the interest piece though is when you reach your 120 and you receive forgiveness, the forgiveness is on that remaining balance which includes any interest that's accured. Um so you know I don't know that that's necessarily a harm. It's kind of a wash. I guess the the risk would be is if you didn't do PSLF and and decided to to you know repay the entire loan, you'd have an increased um balance, but um yeah, it's just that you're not making payments, so you're extending your time to forgiveness. Um you know, and you may have some uncertainty later if you use that PSLF buyback process as far as timing. So um that's I would say that's really it and it's you know, your um personal circumstances. you know, I think the main reason at this point that folks are choosing to stay in the forbearance is probably financial reasons. Um, you know, is just not being able to make a payment right now. So, um, but yeah, it's it's up to you. I will add right that I think another downside that people are not considering uh is that maybe your income now is lower than it would have been later, right? So by so by switching now you might actually have a lower payment than maybe like next year um for 12 months because that's the good thing about um IVR right like once you certify your payments stay the same for 12 months right so by delaying it if for some reason you get a bump in your income um you might actually have higher payments down the road so that's another thing to consider and also the what I call the opportunity cost of employment right right now you're employed in the in in the public sector and you have the ability to make qualifying payments if for some reason your employment changes six months down the road, right? Um then you might have missed the opportunity, right? To get these months to count um um you can use the buyback, but you know buyback has its own downsides. I would say if you are able financially to get into any of the income driven repayment plans, that's what I I I recommend people do, right? Um, if you're just on a wait and see because you want to, that's not typically something that I would recommend. If you have the financial ability to make payments under an IDR and you're employed in the public sector, making that switch is really going to put you in the best position. Yeah. And actually, that's a good point. So, one of the things um that I'll also add for context is we don't know when the save forbbearance will end, right? That's actually dependent on the lawsuit um that's, you know, challenging the SAVE program. And so it's entirely possible that it could end somewhat abruptly and you may not have control at that point over when you enter repayment. Um so that's something we know for sure that the f the state forbarance at the latest will um go away at that July 1, 2028 um time, but you know it's more so dependent on the lawsuit from the time before that. So um that's a kind of another element to consider.

All right. So, the next question is, I've heard that you may be disqualified from PSLF if you miss one payment. Is that true? No. Um, if you miss a payment, it might just mean and you're working still in the in the public sector, right? It might just mean that you might have to make one additional payment, right, to to get back to that to get that forgiveness um while you're working at your job. But no, just because you miss one payment, it does not mean that all the payments you had before is going to go away. Like the payments you have that are qualifying are going to remain qualifying um regardless if you miss one payment or not. I will say though that if you don't make a payment, you become delinquent and need to make that payment still, right? So like if you miss a payment and then stop paying on your loans, right? That's going to become a problem. But like if you miss a payment or more maybe more accurately you miss making a payment on the due date and make it later, right, to make up for it, right? Like you still have to make that payment. Um so like that's kind of an element as well unless you switch into a forbbearance, then you might not have to make make that payment. True. True. Yeah. If you're in the situation where you're missing a payment, please please please contact your serer um to see if if you're able to to get into a forbearance if you're not able to then make that payment.

Um all right. I'm not 100% sure the context of this question. It says, "Why were those of us on save plan not grandfathered in? Are there lawsuits challenging this?" I don't understand the context of the question, unfortunately. I think what they mean is is like why are they not getting credit, right? Like why are they not getting because the Department of Education decided that that's the the reason that they just decided that's that's the answer.

Okay. Um do borrowers have to wait until they've completed all 120 months of repayment to apply for PSLF?

I'm asking because it takes it's taking months to process the form. Also, forgiveness isn't approved until after the 120 months have been paid off. Should the borrower keep paying until approval is obtained? And does the borrower have to submit a form to get a refund? If yes, how long is that taking? Okay, so there's a few different parts to all of this. So, um, we recommend certifying your employment yearly if you're with the same employer or any time that you change jobs or start jobs. um right to make sure that you're continuing to make progress and tracking that progress. If you're at that point where you've made your 120

payments and you're applying then to actually get forgiveness, not just certify your employment, um uh that can take a few months um for it to process. Uh

sorry, I'm just reading the next part of the question. At the point that you make 120 payments and you submit your form for forgiveness, if you are confident that you've hit your 120 months and it's just a matter of them processing the form, you can request for your serer to place you into a forbearance. That forbearance time is not going to count towards PSLF and does have interest acrruel. Um, but you're able to then, you know, not make any further payments at that point that you've reached 120. Um the only risk is if for some reason there's, you know, an issue and they don't count a month or something and then you maybe have to make another payment. But um uh and then as far as a refund process, um if for some reason you have an overpayment, um so maybe you paid some months and then certified your employment and you actually had over 120. Um there's nothing that you do to initiate that. It's essentially um your effective date is on the paperwork. Uh that goes to the serer. The serer right forgives the loans. They then communicate with the department that there is an overpayment balance and then there's a process that then goes through treasury. So it's complicated and if you do have an overpayment or you expect an overpayment refund that could take six months or more for it to actually get to you if that were to happen. So, um, it's a long process and there's not really anything that you can do to further it along. Um, it's just things that are happening in the background behind the scenes.

All right. Um, can you talk about the refund process for borrowers who pay in excess of 120 qualifying payments? So the refund process for you if if you uh get paid over if you pay over 15 125 payments should be automatic but there is no timeline for how long it will take for it to get done right so which is very frustrating for borrowers right so if you're sure that you've made 120 qualifying payments and it has been over six months since you received forgiveness and you have not received the refund. My recommendation to you is to reach out to our office by submitting that complaint form that we we talked about earlier. It's in the chat if you're wondering. Um I would say you have to wait a minimum of six months because for most people it will automatically come a check will automatically come to them from the Treasury office um automatically, right? It just takes some time for it to be processed. If it's been over 6 months, then reach out to our office and then we can try to figure out what's happening and if anything can be done uh for you to get that refund.

All right. I was informed that I completed my 120 qualifying payments and I submitted the PSL application for review. I see it may take up to 3 months for review. Do you know if there's a backlog of reviewing those applications that may push me into the July 1st changes? Um, if you've reached that 120, um, if it's been a while since it's been processed, that's probably more likely due to the government shutdown than anything else. Um, and so I would expect to see in the next few months that that would be taken care of. I don't anticipate if you've reached that 120. They kind of do those things monthly. They run the review of those that have hit 120. And so I don't see any circumstance really that that would push that out into July or you know to when those repayment plan changes happen. I would say if you haven't heard back within that 3 month please reach out to us.

All right. So how often should I have to resertify employment? I got everything approved for my IVR plan in July and it looks like my payments haven't counted from August and beyond due to needing that employment certification. I was under the impression that my certification will continue by my job changes or the like. Oo, great question. No, you have to reertify your your employment. There's three situations, right, where you want to reertify your employment by submitting that PSLF form, right? So once a year if you're staying in the same job, right? every time you switch jobs. So like you switch from one employer to another employer, you want to submit a form to your old employer and then submit a new form to your new employer, right? Um and then the other one is obviously uh once you have made that 120 qualifying payment, right? Those are the three situations that you want to make sure that you certify reertifying your employment. There is no way for them to know that you're still employed unless you resertify employment. You could do it every month. I guess I don't recommend that you do that because your employer might get a little bit annoyed. Um and it doesn't really like it doesn't really benefit you typically to do that. So I like I said every year if you remain in the same employment every time you switch employments and once you hit reach that 120 qualifying payment that's when you're going to submit that PSL form.

All right, there's a couple here that are a little bit lower on the list, but I want to make sure to cover. Um, so, um, one, uh, someone asked to clarify on being employed when applying for forgiveness. Do you have to stay employed until the loan has actually been forgiven? Um, i.e. until the website shows a zero balance. Um, and this person is close to retirement. So, um, it's when you you have to be still employed at the time that you apply for forgiveness. Now, if you are like 100% confident that you have those 120 months, right, it would be okay to change employment. We don't recommend that. Like to be safe, we recommend staying

until you actually get your forgiveness, but it's not required. Um, and the other one I wanted to note, um, you do need to certify your ongoing employment every year. If you've already certified employment for a prior employer um that you're no longer working for, having all of those months certified, you only need to do that that one time. You don't have to um every year resubmit for a previous employer. It's only for your kind of continuing employment that you need to reertify your lead.

Perfect. So what is the difference in how payment amounts are calculated between IBRP and ICR? The the answer to that question is very complicated and honestly I cannot answer that in today because we we have limited amount of time. My recommendation is use the sun.gov application and use the IRS retrieval tool and you will be given the most accurate um payment amounts. Right? What you need to know is that when you're selecting one of these for PSLF, you want to select the one that has the lowest payment. And hopefully the um the the using the the application will give you the confidence that you need to select a plan that will be the best for you.

Um, question. I got switched from IDR to forbearance this year under this administration. Is IDR still happening? Is PSLF really still happening? Um, PSLF is is absolutely still happening. Um, IDR is just that umbrella term for for income driven repayment plans. Um, so I'm not entirely sure, you know, what that circumstance is. is if you were on a specific repayment plan and then put into a forbearance, usually there's something that initiates that forbearance. So, for instance, if you submitted a new IDR application, you might be put into a forbearance while they process that ID application. Um, but those applications are still being processed. Again, there's some delays and if it's been a while since you've submitted that form, you can resubmit it um authorizing that IRS retrieval. Um, but yes, those things are still happening now.

Oh, Jessica, you're muted. Thanks, Amber. So, is there a possible good outcome for us in the same admin forbearance or will we have to be on a new plan no matter the outcome? You will have to be in a new plan, right? When that's going to happen is a little bit uncertain, but yes, you will have to switch into another payment plan. um you're not going to be able to stay on that uh forbearance indefinitely. So hopefully that answers your question. As far as the good outcome, I think we already answered. We don't know. Make decisions based on the information you have right now.

All right. So I know we are coming up on that 1:30 time, which is our scheduled time. Um, I do want to say if you have questions that are kind of specific to your circumstances, we do recommend um submitting a form to our office, our um questions and complaints form. Um, we have that linked uh in the second to last slide on this presentation. It'll also be in the email that goes out. Um, so you can include uh or you can access that form um when you get that email to submit uh your question. Um, so I just want to make sure that folks are aware of that. Um, otherwise I know we're never able to get through all the questions. It looks like we got through almost half of them today. Um, Jessica or Terry, do you have anything to add as we wrap up?

I don't think so. Um, again, if we didn't answer your question, again, we recommend that you use that that questions and complaint form to get to us. Just be patient, right? Because it's going to take us a little bit to get back to you. Um, but we'll get back to you, okay? So, yeah, we're still still working through that back. Please, please share with friends and family members in your community um that you know these presentations exist and pass along information uh so that we can help other public service employees um attain loan forgiveness and have the information they need. Thanks. Yeah. And I'll just ask to or uh let folks know as well. Um so when we send out the recording, one of the things that we're going to do a little bit differently is we're going to set up the um uh timestamps in the video uh on the YouTube video so that you can come back and review different sections that are relevant to you from our presentation today. Um so hopefully that will be helpful. We've had some folks request that. So um thank you all very much for attending today. Um we look forward to assisting you. Hang in there. We know this stuff is confusing and complicated. We're here to help as much as we can. So, um, please take care and have a good rest of your day and happy holidays.

Thank you everyone. Bye-bye.