

## Message From the Chief Financial Officer

The Office of Finance and Operations (OFO) is committed to supporting the Department of Education’s mission to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.” Our Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Agency Financial Report is a valuable tool the public can use to better understand the Department’s programs and how they effectuate this critical mission. In FY 2023, the Department continued to implement new programs geared toward improving student educational outcomes and helping student loan borrowers transition to their new loan repayment status.

On January 24, 2023, Secretary Cardona announced the “Raise the Bar: Lead the World” initiative. This plan represents an opportunity to improve the nation’s education system from preschool through college. It focuses on three major areas: achieving academic excellence, boldly improving learning conditions, and creating pathways for global engagement.

The Administration is also taking additional steps aimed at providing debt relief to eligible borrowers. Specifically, the agency initiated a rulemaking process aimed at offering an alternative path to debt relief for many working and middle-class borrowers. The Department also instituted a 12-month “on-ramp” to repayment, running from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024, so that financially vulnerable borrowers who miss monthly payments during this period are not considered delinquent, reported to credit bureaus, placed in default, or referred to debt collection agencies.

OFO supports these initiatives by providing human capital, financial, acquisition and grants management services across all Departmental offices. In addition to supporting these programs, OFO continued working with leaders across the agency to ensure effective financial stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Over the course of FY 2023, the Department made process improvements to address issues identified in the FY 2022 financial statement audit. The FY 2022 disclaimer of opinion was largely related to the Broad-Based Debt Relief program and its impact on the agency’s financial statement re-estimates. This year, the independent auditor issued a disclaimer of opinion on the Department’s FY 2023 balance sheet. The Department will develop and implement additional corrective action strategies to address the issues highlighted in the FY 2023 report. We remain committed to continually evaluating new programs, current business processes, and our internal controls for improvement opportunities in FY 2024 and beyond.

Through the hard work and dedication of our employees and partners we will continue to make improvements in our programs and operations. We will continue to serve as accountable and committed stewards supporting the Department’s mission on behalf of the public while enhancing our financial management capabilities.

*Denise L. Carter*

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*Delegated the authority to perform the functions and duties  
of the position of Chief Financial Officer  
November 16, 2023*