



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**To: News Media**

**From: Bamberg County Administration**

**Date: July 22, 2024**

**Re: Bamberg County Officials Attend Denmark Tech Roundtable Discussion on Student Debt Relief with US Education Secretary Cardona and Congressman Clyburn**

**Bamberg, South Carolina (July 2024)** – On Thursday, July 18, after visiting and touring Voorhees University and Denmark Technical College, US Education Secretary Dr. Miguel Cardona, and Congressman James Clyburn participated in a roundtable discussion with area public servants who received debt forgiveness from the federal government.

The following Bamberg County and City officials were present at the Denmark Tech roundtable discussion:

Bamberg Councilmembers:

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- Phil Myers (District 1)
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- Sharon Hammond (District 2)
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- Larry Haynes (District 3)
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- Spencer Donaldson (District 4)
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- Dr. Jonathan Goodman (District 5)
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- Bamberg County Administrator Joey Preston
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- Deputy County Administrator Thomas Thomas
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- Assistant to the County Administrator Chip Maier
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- Clerk to County Council Rose Shepherd
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- Bamberg County Public Information Officer Alisha Moore
  
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- Bamberg Mayor Nancy Foster
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- Denmark City Councilman/Bamberg County C-Fund Chairman Harold Johnson
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The primary focus of the discussion was student loan forgiveness and the positive impact it has had on local educators and other public servants. Secretary Cardona and Congressman Clyburn promoted the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF), which was originally passed in 2007 but not fully implemented until recently. Yesterday, the Biden administration announced an additional \$1.2 billion in loan forgiveness for roughly 35,000 eligible borrowers. One teacher, Debra Jones, shared her academic and professional journey, which relied heavily on student loans. She and other participants explained how after decades of trying to pay their student loans down, they saw no end in sight until the federal government passed and implemented the PSLF. Congressman Clyburn shared an example of how impactful this legislation has been, citing a North Charleston chiropractor who had originally borrowed \$60,000 and faithfully made payments for over two decades. However, high interest rates caused that amount to balloon to almost \$120,000.

Both Secretary Cardona and Congressman Clyburn met with and answered questions from County leaders after the roundtable. Councilman Dr. Jonathan Goodman presented Secretary Cardona with a Bamberg 125th centennial coin as a token of appreciation for recognizing a place that is often forgotten. Goodman said, “Thank you for knowing we matter and are a part of the bigger picture. Sometimes, we feel left out because we are smaller and feel like we have to yell a little louder to get the recognition we need.” Secretary Cardona thanked County and City officials for welcoming him and for their “service.”

County Administrator Joey Preston said, “This visit underscores the importance of making higher education affordable and attainable for everyone, especially those in small, rural communities like Bamberg. We are immensely grateful to the Congressman and Education Secretary for visiting our corner of the world and for listening to our views on this very important subject.”

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For more information on this press release, email [info@bambergcounty.sc.gov](mailto:info@bambergcounty.sc.gov).