

This year the Folklife Festival marks its 50th Anniversary, and the youth performers of Circus Juventas will be sharing their artistry with hundreds of thousands of visitors in performances throughout the two weeks of the festival.

The founders of Circus Juventas, Dan and Betty Butler, not only build confidence and excellence in their students through a multicultural circus arts education, but also inspire more than 50,000 audience members every year with their professional-level performances. Circus Juventas is a key member of the vibrant arts community in Minnesota's 4th District.

Since its founding in 1994, Circus Juventas has grown into the largest performing arts circus school in North America. Over 2,500 students participate in their year round and summer camp programs. The students of Circus Juventas learn world-class skills in traditional and contemporary circus arts. As these young people come together to put on their collaborative cirque nouveau performances, they also learn the values of teamwork, self-confidence, discipline, dedication, leadership, and collaboration.

As their Member of Congress, I commend all the students of Circus Juventas and Dan and Betty Butler as they bring their renowned performances and community engagement to the National Mall as the Folklife Festival celebrates the Circus Arts.

The creativity that they inspire and the connections they build are a gift to our community, and we are all proud of their chance to share those gifts on a national stage.

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IN TRIBUTE TO SISTER JOEL  
READ

**HON. GWEN MOORE**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 29, 2017*

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sister Joel Read who has served as a mentor, teacher, college professor, a fierce advocate for women's rights and academic administrator. She was the longtime leader of Alverno College and her vision of placing abilities over grades put her among the nation's top college innovators. Sister Joel Read died, May 25, 2017 at the age of 91 years.

Sister Read led her alma mater for nearly 35 years. The women's college located on Milwaukee's south side reflected her trailblazing approach. The depth of her influence reached far beyond the Alverno campus because of her involvement not only in local and national academic issues, but also due to her international network of contacts. She oversaw multi-million dollar fund raising campaigns that expanded the campus footprint, as well as scholarship and academic offerings. Under her leadership, Alverno launched one of the first internship programs in the country and initiated Weekend College targeted at working women. Sister Read focused on students developing abilities, rather than making grades to demonstrate skills and knowledge. The distinctive ability-based, "assessment-as-learning" curriculum approach introduced in 1973, still draws educators from around the world to visit Alverno.

She was a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis since 1945. She was a fierce ad-

vocate for women's rights and was one of the founders of the National Organization for Women in 1966. President Gerald Ford appointed her to the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year in 1975. National leaders in political and education circles also sought her counsel. President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the National Council on the Humanities. Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton invited her to the White House to discuss educational policy. She was singled out as one of a handful of college presidents who broke educational ground in the past 100 years, in the book, "The Many Lives of Academic Presidents".

Alverno College has opened doors to those who did not see college in their future. Alverno's enrollment is roughly 2,200. Forty-five percent of the undergrad population comes from the city of Milwaukee, and 44 percent are women of color. Nearly seven in 10 are first-generation college students. Alverno consistently receives high ratings in US News & World Report. A 2015 report by The Education Trust found Alverno had both the highest percentage (36.2 percent) of federal Pell Grant recipients and minority undergrads (35.7 percent) among Wisconsin colleges and universities. Pell Grants provide need-based grants to low-income students.

She retired as President of Alverno College in 2003 having served as one of the nation's longest serving college presidents and remained an energetic force in retirement. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Sister Joel Read. She has left a legacy of advocacy and compassion. She was a true trailblazer. The citizens of the Fourth Congressional District, the State of Wisconsin and the nation have benefited tremendously from her dedicated service. I am honored for these reasons to pay tribute to Sister Joel Read.

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INTRODUCTION OF THE TRANS-  
FORM STUDENT DEBT TO HOME  
EQUITY ACT

**HON. MARCY KAPTUR**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 29, 2017*

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the Transform Student Debt to Home Equity Act of 2017—a bill that enables graduates to transform their student debt into an opportunity to purchase and own a home.

With an estimated \$1.3 trillion student debt owed to the federal government, plunging homeownership rates among young people, and 17.2 million habitable homes sitting vacant in the United States, our nation must find a way to address the student debt vs. housing conundrum. Luckily, there is a popular lending instrument already in widespread use that could serve as a significant bridge to the future: the home mortgage. This common lending tool, overtime, has the power to transform student loan repayments into a financial instrument for building equity: the home.

Creating a path for credit worthy student debt holders to convert their debt payment stream into home equity would require many federal departments to collaborate. However, an initial effort to test the concept can take the form of a pilot program through the Depart-

ment of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA).

This is what the Transform Student Debt to Home Equity Act achieves. The bill authorizes HUD and FHFA to establish a pilot that connects creditworthy federal student debt holders with housing properties for sale but held by the federal government. By arranging financing that recalculates terms, debt-to-income ratios, interest rates, and other factors, short-term student debt could transition into longer-term home ownership. Eventually, participants would help restore neighborhoods, and buoy property values locally and on the federal ledger simply by maintaining and investing in a home mortgage.

The status quo has created a permanent class of millions of student debtors without the opportunity for equity homeownership. We have the resources, the power, and a compelling economic interest to do something about it.

Let's get started. I encourage my colleagues to support this measure and unleash this debt stranglehold on the next generation.

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CONGRATULATING NEW YORK  
CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL DEBATE  
CHAMPIONS FOR 2016 AND 2017—  
MIDDLE SCHOOL 50

**HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 29, 2017*

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and honor that I rise to congratulate the students, and teachers from Middle School 50 (MS 50)—the John D. Wells School on its successful reign as New York City Middle School Debate Champions for 2016 and 2017.

MS 50 is located in the Southside of Williamsburg, Brooklyn of my district. It serves students from 6th thru 8th grade and has an enrollment that is 82 percent Latino with 21 percent of the students being English Language Learners. Despite personal challenges, these students have persevered and are competitive debaters. The school's debate program has helped students develop lifelong skills like critical thinking, verbal and written communication, leadership, teamwork, and determination. They understand that debate is an art form that requires the tactful ability to argue or refute a policy while maintaining proper decorum.

Today, debate remains the bedrock of our constitution and political system. It is uplifting to know that these students recognize the power of words and understand the art of debate. I am extremely proud of them. I also want to recognize and commend Principal Ben Honoroff, Debate Coaches Jason Warren, Matthew Mason, Thuy-An Vo, Andrew Geathers, and Carolina Hidalgo, and teachers for their support of this program and working with the Middle School Quality Initiative, a New York City Department of Education program focused on preparing middle school students for college. Please join me in saluting the MS 50 Debate New York City Champion Debate Team of 2016 and 2017.

Kevin Ascension, Jusue Canatero Nixon, Brandy Flores, Anthony Imbert, Kelvin Imbert,