**CSPN Market Volatility Communications Toolkit**

Sample Op-ed:

If you’ve been thinking about saving for your child’s post-secondary education, you may be surprised to learn that now is an ideal time to start investing in a 529 college savings plan. Most 529 accounts can be opened with a minimal initial investment and setting up recurring contributions in an amount that fits within your budget is simple.

As of December 31, 2022, there are more than 16 million open 529 accounts nationally, and over $411 billion has been saved. Americans realize the value and purpose of long-term savings available in 529 accounts. Not only are more people opening 529 accounts, but they are committed to automatic contributions to the accounts. 38% of 529 accounts are currently receiving automatic contributions. The recently released data can be viewed here.

With investments fluctuating in 2022, it is easy to look at the newly released data and draw some concerns for 529 plans and investment options. While more accounts were added nationally, the amount of money saved has decreased. However, I would like to point out that 529 savings plans provide opportunities to set oneself up for success in investment downturns.

Investing in year-of-enrollment or age-based portfolios helps to weather market volatility. These investment options are designed to fit particular investment time horizons. 529 plan contributions are invested based on the anticipated time to college enrollment or the age of the beneficiary. They will typically be invested more heavily in underlying equity investments when the beneficiary is younger and more heavily in fixed-income and money market investments as the beneficiary nears enrollment in college. As the beneficiary gets older, the portfolio will shift to become more conservative.

You can’t control the markets and economy; however, you can control how much you save and the diversification of your investments. Investment professionals suggest focusing on your risk tolerance or comfort level, the long-term savings strategy, and staying the course. When markets get rocky, it’s tempting to take action. But that may only disrupt long-term goals. It continues to be a good idea for account owners to periodically assess their investment choices with their time horizon, risk tolerance, and investment objectives in mind. Speaking to a financial professional for anyone who is uncertain as to next steps is also an option.

Families’ financial goals for their children and grandchildren’s education remain the College Savings Plans Network’s (CSPN) core mission in good economic times and bad. As a part of that mission, CSPN prioritizes equipping 529 plan participants and the public with the information and tools they need to minimize student debt for the next generation. In situations like those we experienced in 2022 with the markets, that can mean staying the course and focusing on children’s long-term and boundless dreams.

Investors who focus long-term, stay the course, do not jump in and out of the markets, and who consistently contribute are those that have the potential to be rewarded over the long term. Remember and focus on the big picture—especially during unpredictable market periods.

Based on the recent CSPN data, more Americans are keeping that important focus top of mind for their loved ones and are saving for education. That is something everyone can celebrate! To see the past data, visit <https://www.collegesavings.org/529-plan-data/>.

So don’t let the market’s unpredictability keep or delay you from investing in your loved one’s future. Opening a 529 college savings plan and setting up recurring contributions – even in small amounts – can potentially add up to big savings down the road.