

March 12, 2020

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran, Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
SR-412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

U.S. Senator Jon Tester, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
SR-412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Tester:

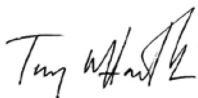
On behalf of the associations listed below, representing two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities, I write in strong support of your legislation to ensure that veterans can continue to receive their GI bill benefits in situations where campuses are forced to move courses online due to the coronavirus. We understand the Senate is already moving this legislation forward and we hope the House will quickly take up and pass the Senate bill.

Your bipartisan legislation would grant the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the authority to continue to provide VA educational assistance to veterans when an approved program of education at a college or university is converted to an online program due to an emergency or health-related situation. This authority would be available immediately and would extend through December 21, 2020.

In light of coronavirus challenges, many campuses are working quickly to stand up online classroom instruction as a way to protect students and campus communities and limit contagion. However, moving approved programs of education online has the potential to significantly and negatively impact the ability of veterans to receive their education benefits. As just one example, under current Post-9/11 GI bill rules, student veterans taking courses online typically receive only half the housing allowance of their on-campus peers. Because most veteran students and their families have already made housing arrangements, including signing leases for the current semester or term, a drastic cut in their living expenses would be a considerable hardship during these already difficult times.

We strongly support your efforts to ensure that veterans' educational benefits are not impacted by campus efforts to move coursework online in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Thank you again for your leadership on this issue. We stand ready to work with you and the VA to address other issues impacting military-connected students and their benefits that may arise as a result of the coronavirus disruption.

Sincerely,



Terry Hartle
Senior Vice President, Government and Public Affairs

On behalf of:
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities