

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert “Bobby” Scott
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Alexander, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member Foxx,

On behalf of the members of the Veterans Education Project (VEP) which represents the interests and concerns of well over one million members of the Army and Air National Guard, their family members, Veterans, and survivors, we would like to highlight that Stakeholders have limited insight into the effectiveness of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and taxpayer return on investment.

Individual student-level data systems are found in the Departments of Education (ED) and Veterans Affairs (VA), but their data is isolated from one another, which inhibits analysis of outcomes. Unfortunately, there is not yet a regularized infrastructure to facilitate data sharing, making it impossible to analyze the current use of the Post-9/11 GI Bill or determine its return on investment (ROI). As a result, Veterans and family members utilizing the Post-9/11 GI Bill sometimes enroll in programs with low student success rates.

The sharing of specific data¹ between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Education would immediately improve the GI Bill Calculator—a tool designed by VA to help Veterans and their families make the most of their education benefits—by the addition of programmatic outcomes and the expected ROI of Veteran education benefits. Furthermore, analyzing combined VA and ED data would give stakeholders the evidence necessary to create good policy and promote best practices.

This data sharing is already established in 20 U.S. Code § 1015, which directs the Commissioner of Education Statistics to: develop a uniform methodology of reporting postsecondary spending, design systems capable of receiving and analyzing data from other federal agencies, disseminate data to stakeholders, and work with the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to collect, study, and disseminate information on financial aid and education benefits.

The sharing of information between the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Education will better inform policy, generate an improved GI Bill Calculator, boost the value of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and save taxpayer dollars. Therefore, we encourage the Committees to submit letters to VA requesting that VA share its data with the Department of Education.

Sincerely,



¹ Please See the Recommendation of Enclosed White Paper “Creating a Better GI Bill Calculator”

Daniel Elkins
19th SFG
Army National Guard
Executive Director
Veterans Education Project