

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the associations listed below, representing the nation's two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities and the students they serve, I write in strong support of S. 3503, 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 COVID-19. On Monday, the Senate passed this important, bipartisan legislation by unanimous consent and we ask the House to work quickly to take up and pass the bill.

S. 3503 would grant the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the authority to continue to provide education benefits for veterans when approved programs of education at colleges and universities are moved online 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 programs of education online has the potential to significantly and negatively impact the ability of veterans to receive GI bill 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 efforts to ensure that veterans' educational benefits are not impacted by campus efforts to move coursework online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that the uncertainty as to when and how these issues will be addressed is particularly hard on our military-connected students. Therefore, we call on the House leadership to call up and quickly pass the bipartisan Senate legislation. We thank you for your leadership on issues impacting veterans and stand ready to work with you and the VA to address other issues impacting military-connected students during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

ACPA-College Student Educators International
ACT, Inc.

American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American College Health Association
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
APPA, Leadership in Educational Facilities
Appalachian College Association
Association for Biblical Higher Education
Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Chiropractic Colleges
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities
Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania
Association of Independent Colleges of Art & Design
Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of Independent Colleges
Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia
Council on Social Work Education
EDUCAUSE
ETS
Georgia Independent College Association
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Independent Colleges and Universities of Missouri
Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas
Independent Colleges of Indiana
Independent Colleges of Washington
Kansas Independent College Association
Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Maryland Independent College and University Association
Michigan Independent Colleges & Universities
Minnesota Private College Council
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Association of System Heads
Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities
North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges & Universities
Physician Assistant Education Association
South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
TMCF
UPCEA
West Virginia Independent Colleges & Universities
Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Yes We Must Coalition