

September 23, 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 legislation to extend the provisions of S.3503, a bill to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide flexibility for programs of education that converted to distance learning due to COVID-19, and H.R. 6322, the Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act, which were signed into law earlier this spring.

Colleges and universities deeply appreciate your efforts to protect veterans' education benefits from disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Among their provisions, S. 3503 and H.R. 6322:

- allow veterans to continue to receive GI Bill tuition and housing benefits at the “in-person” rate when coursework moves online due to the pandemic;
- authorize VA to continue to pay VA work study allowances to veterans, even if their campuses are shut down and/or veterans are unable to reach their place of employment;
- expand on provisions in current law to ensure that veterans can receive an additional monthly housing allowance payment if their institution closes due to COVID-19;
- clarify that veterans can have their education entitlements—normally limited to 36 months—restored if their campus closes or the veteran needs to withdraw due to the COVID-19 emergency; and
- allow veterans who are currently enrolled and approaching their delimiting date (the date on which their benefits would expire) to apply to VA for an extension.

These provisions are currently set to expire Dec. 21, 2020. Although this is three months away, planning on campuses for the spring semester is already underway. Extending these provisions would be enormously helpful in reassuring veterans that their education benefits will continue without disruption for the spring term.

Thanks to your leadership, we understand extensions of these important laws have been included in the H.R. 8337, the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, which passed the House yesterday and is expected to be taken up by the Senate shortly. We strongly support these efforts and urge swift passage of the legislation.

Thank you again for helping ensure veterans can continue to pursue higher education, especially during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ted Mitchell
President

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 Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators