

July 30, 2013

The Honorable Richard Durbin, Chairman
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Committee on Appropriations
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Cochran:

The Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program is designed to ensure that active duty military may enhance their civilian skills and talents for the benefit of the military. Similarly, Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts program (MyCAA) funds are designed to ensure that military spouses have the ability to acquire relevant civilian job skills to find meaningful employment despite the transient nature of military life. As advocates for service members, veterans and their loved ones, we request your help in improving these benefit programs by implementing three provisions to protect the military community.

First, please develop policies to ensure that Tuition Assistance and MyCAA dollars finance only those programs that leave graduates eligible to sit for relevant professional licenses. For many programs currently eligible for Tuition Assistance and MyCAA, graduates are not allowed to sit for required licensing exams or other necessary credentialing requirements, making them ineligible to pursue a career in the field for which they believe they were trained. It is unfair to service members and their spouses, and a poor use of taxpayer dollars to allow programs that purport to prepare students for civilian careers to tap into military benefit programs when graduates are not eligible to sit for relevant professional licenses.

Second, thirty percent of institutions receiving MyCAA funds are unregulated, do not qualify for Department of Education aid under Title IV, or lack accreditation of any kind – including several of the top recipients of MyCAA funds. Please direct the Department of Defense to require schools accepting MyCAA and Tuition Assistance funds to meet the same standards the Department of Education requires for Title IV funds to include accreditation and basic educational quality. We were pleased to see that the Senate Armed Services Committee's version of the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act would require institutions receiving Defense Department student aid programs to be eligible for the Education Department's Title IV program.

Finally, please restrict Tuition Assistance and MyCAA funds to those institutions of higher education that do not utilize federal education aid to pay for recruiting and marketing. Institutions of higher learning should remain free to pay for marketing and recruiting using their own funds. There is no need to name colleges or to single out any one type of higher education institution. No institution of higher education – whether it is

a public university, a community college, a private non-profit, a proprietary college, or a career training program – should spend taxpayer dollars on recruiting students from the military community.

As advocates for service members and their loved ones in higher education, we look forward to discussing ways to improve Tuition Assistance and MyCAA, ensuring funds are used to help our military community acquire quality skills to enhance military professionalism or compete in the civilian workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

Association of the US Navy
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
Military Officers Association of America
National Guard Association of the U.S.
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Student Veterans of America
Veterans of Foreign Wars
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association
VetJobs
Veterans for Common Sense
Veterans Education Success
Veterans' Student Loan Relief Fund
Vietnam Veterans of America