June 27, 2022

Hon. Mark Takano
Chairman
House Veterans Affairs Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Mike Bost
Ranking Member
House Veterans Affairs Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Bost:

On behalf of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities’ (AJCU) 27 U.S. member institutions, I would like to express my support for HR 8198, a bill “to improve the process by which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines whether an educational institution meets requirements relating to the percentage of students who receive educational assistance furnished by the Secretary.”

AJCU is proud to serve student veterans at our institutions of higher education. Our colleges and universities are deeply committed to offering strong academic and support services to our nation’s student veterans and our campus communities are dedicated to veteran student success in post-secondary study. All 27 of our U.S. schools participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program as a way of making a Jesuit higher education accessible and affordable to this particular population of students.

For student veterans, the 85/15 rule serves as an important safeguard, protecting these students, and their educational benefits, from predatory fraud and abuse. But for colleges and universities with very small student veteran populations, (like AJCU institutions which have an average to 2.7% student veteran enrollment) the VA’s current policies have added a layer of confusion and bureaucracy, imposing negative consequences for student veterans by limiting the programs for which they are eligible to enroll. Among our schools, there are several examples of programs deemed ineligible to enroll student veterans even though no student veterans are currently enrolled in those programs.

This legislation is sorely needed. Congressional intent has been clear, but this legislation will leave no question that institutions of higher education with a student veteran population of less than 35 percent (among other criteria) should not be subject to calculating or complying with the 85/15 rule. Legislative safeguards included in the Higher Education Act, coupled with the thoughtful provisions included in HR 8198, give us confidence that
student veterans and their benefits will be protected from abuse while ensuring these students are able to use their earned benefits to pursue academic pathways that fit their needs and advance their long-term career goals.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and other issues of significant importance to higher education. If you have any questions or need additional information from our institutions, please contact Jenny Smulson, our Vice President for Government Relations, at jsmulson@ajcunet.edu.

Sincerely,

Rev. Michael J. Garanzini, S.J.
President
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities