

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 14, 2016

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

We write to ask that you take immediate action to ensure that veterans who were enrolled at ITT Education Services, Inc. (ITT) have the information and resources necessary to make informed decisions about their educational futures and are not adversely impacted by its closure. We also ask that you take necessary action to protect veterans from further exploitation by for-profit colleges.

As you know, on August 26, 2016, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) took steps to protect students and taxpayers by banning the use of federal financial aid for any new students at ITT. On September 6, 2016, ITT announced it would close operations immediately. Shortly after ED's announcement, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) notified GI Bill beneficiaries enrolled at ITT that their programs carried significant risks that could impact their ability to attain their educational goals. We applaud VA's prompt correspondence, but now that ITT has closed, we believe VA must do much more to ensure student veterans have sufficient options and resources.

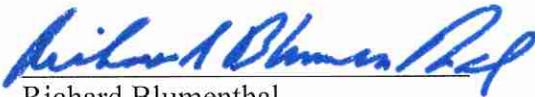
ITT's closure puts thousands of GI Bill beneficiaries in a precarious situation. For those who rely on the GI Bill's housing stipend to provide for their families while continuing their education, this disruption could lead to the loss of their housing. The closure leads to the immediate loss of a critical benefit and unexpected financial hardship for our veterans and their families. We urge you to take immediate action, in coordination with ED, to minimize the negative impacts of the closure by encouraging high-quality transfer options at public and not-for-profit institutions, including low-cost community colleges, to allow maximum continuity of their educational experience and GI Bill benefits. It would be adding insult to injury to allow these students to go from ITT to another for-profit college facing state or federal investigations or lawsuits.

VA has a responsibility to provide substantial guidance and assistance to student veterans as they develop alternative educational plans in a quick timeframe. The *Veterans First Act* outlines a strategy to provide relief by extending living stipends and reinstating benefits for Post-9/11 GI Bill students who are victimized by the closure of unscrupulous schools, like Corinthian Colleges and ITT. As we continue to work to pass that critical legislation, we urge you to work with Congress to develop additional strategies to alleviate the unfair burden of school closures on veterans.

ITT's demise underscores the need for VA to more aggressively oversee institutions of higher education to prevent and protect veterans from exploitation by for-profit colleges. Especially in light of the upcoming ED decision on the withdrawal of recognition of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), we urge you to work in close coordination with State Approving Agencies to protect veterans who attend schools that have been accredited by bad actors in higher education or are at risk of financial insolvency and imminent closure. As Congress works toward passage of the *Veterans Education Relief and Restoration Act of 2015* (VERRA) provision in the *Veterans First Act*, VA must use all of its existing authority to help student veterans navigate the inherent stress of these closures in the least disruptive way possible.

Thank you for your attention to these issues and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



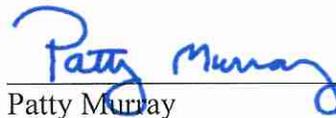
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Richard Durbin
United States Senator



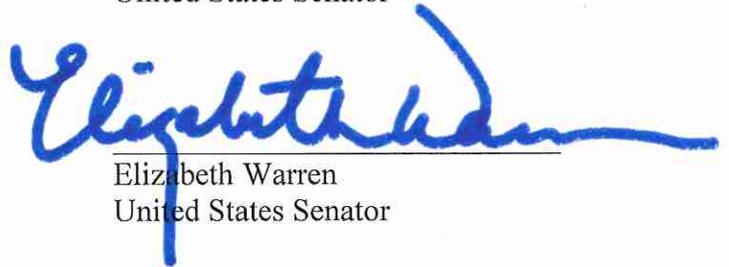
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Tom Carper
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator