July 17, 2015

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20420  

Dear Secretary McDonald:  

We are writing to bring to your attention allegations that a number of questionable unaccredited educational institutions have received G.I. Bill benefits despite federal regulations to prevent it, according to a report this week from the Center for Investigative Reporting. We urge you to investigate these claims swiftly and to increase the Department of Veterans Affairs’ enforcement of its protections for veterans’ education benefits.  

Federal law permits unaccredited educational institutions to receive Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits in limited circumstances to ensure veterans can access professional and trade school expertise. The VA is charged with protecting our veterans from unscrupulous entities by enforcing federal regulations allowing only those institutions whose instruction is “consistent in quality, content, and length” with accredited institutions. VA’s enforcement and oversight is critical given over 2,000 unaccredited institutions have reportedly received more than $260 million in G.I. Bill benefits between 2009 and 2014.  

The report documents a number of educationally questionable, and in some instances morally repugnant, institutions that have inexplicably received VA education benefits. These include an unlicensed massage therapy school, an institute whose parent organization is a listed hate group, and an institute on human sexuality claiming to be in possession of child pornography. If true, this is a terrible failure of our promise to veterans and taxpayers. We urge you to immediately and thoroughly investigate these allegations, and step up the VA’s enforcement of its regulations in partnership with state approving agencies.  

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.  

Sincerely,  

[Signatures]

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator  

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Thomas Carper
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator