

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

Re: CARES Act Guidance and Military-Connected Students

Dear Secretary DeVos:

On behalf of veterans, service members, their families, and survivors represented by our organizations, we ask for clarification on guidance provided by the Department on April 21, 2020, on the distribution of emergency funding to students under the *Coronavirus Aid, Relieve, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*. We are concerned that the Department's recent guidance might unintentionally preclude the provision of federal emergency grants to some veterans and other military-connected students who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Department's [guidance](#) states under question nine that students who are eligible for Title IV federal student aid may receive emergency grants under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund found in section 18004 of the *CARES Act*. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators [noted](#) that having a student's FAFSA on file would be the only practicable way for an institution to determine if a student is Title IV-eligible. This means that students who have not already filed a FAFSA, including a large number of veterans and military-connected students, would be ineligible to receive this critical emergency assistance.

According to the [Department's 2015-16 survey data](#), 36 percent of undergraduate student veterans did not file a FAFSA, compared to 29 percent of non-veterans. Almost half of student veterans who attended a 2-year community college did not apply for federal student aid and only 35 percent and 33 percent of undergraduate veterans who attended a 4-year nonprofit or public institution, respectively, filled out the FAFSA.

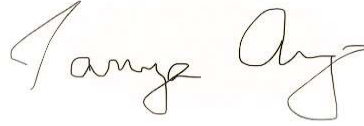
Many student veterans who have not applied for federal aid are experiencing the same costs of disruption to their campus life and financial distress as those students who have applied. While we know the Department is actively working to support all students during a significantly challenging time in our country, we believe this situation could easily be rectified by simply returning to the Department's original [guidance](#) from April 9. Another possible path to ensure veterans are receiving the emergency aid as Congress intended could include the Department clarifying that service members, veterans, and their dependents are automatically eligible for CARES funding.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and are happy to further discuss this with you or your staff to provide any necessary support in bringing clarity to this situation.

Sincerely,



Vice President of Government Affairs
Student Veterans of America



Vice President
Veterans Education Success