



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

March 27, 2018

The Honorable Tom Carper
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Carper:

Thank you for your January 18, 2018, letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding the status of two agreements VA announced with the Department of Education's Federal Student Aid office.

The Department of Education (ED) and VA initiated a discussion related to Post-9/11 GI Bill student default, median loan debt, and repayment rates in 2015. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed in November 2016. As noted in the MOA, ED estimated the necessary systems modifications to conduct the debt calculations for the Veteran student population would be completed by the end of 2017. Recent discussions at ED led to the conclusion that the methodology intended may not work using the VA data so a meeting was held on February 6, 2018, to discuss viable options. VA sent ED a sample file to work with on March 6, 2018, so VA and ED can determine the best path forward.

VA and ED also signed a Computer Matching Agreement (CMA) related to loan forgiveness in November 2016. The information technology system modifications that would allow ED to receive large data files from VA did not occur due to budget constraints in ED. In December 2017, ED informed VA that they had secured the necessary funds to create the direct connection.

ED and VA continue to collaborate to complete an interagency security agreement (ISA). The ISA will provide the technical and security requirements for a data connection between ED and VA. The ISA will support the MOA and the CMA. VA reviewed the ISA and returned it to ED for modification on January 25, 2018. ED and VA expect to have the ISA and the data connection completed by the end of April 2018.

Should you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact Ms. Nikki Barnes, Congressional Relations Officer, at (202) 224-7095 or by email at Nikki.Barnes@va.gov.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Shulkin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David J. Shulkin, M.D.