



THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

March 18, 2020

CALIFORNIA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION:

Dear Members of Congress:

As part of the University of California's (UC), California State University's (CSU) and the California Community Colleges' (CCC) responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person instruction on UC, CSU and CCC campuses has shifted to remote instruction in as many instances as practicable, and will continue to be conducted remotely as long as necessary to protect public health. As you may already be aware, a longer-term shift to remote instruction will have adverse consequences for students who receive Veteran Affairs education and employment benefits unless Congress and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) take immediate action.

Specifically, GI Bill and Vocation Rehabilitation and Employment beneficiaries' Monthly Housing Allowances (MHA) will be reduced by up to 50 percent if programs of study are transitioned from the "in-residence" or "hybrid" education modalities to the "distance education" modality, if the VA is not provided with the flexibility to continue MHA benefits at current levels.

Further, considering the VA's Oct. 1, 2019 decision to assume responsibility as the State Approving Agency (SAA) for California's programs of education qualifying for acceptance of VA benefits, we ask the VA for maximum flexibility in approving qualifications of educational institutions and qualifying programs to allow our institutions to continue to provide GI Bill recipients with educational benefits.

To address these pressing concerns during this unprecedented public health crisis, we urge you to support the immediate consideration and approval of H.R. 6194 and S.3503, legislation that would provide the VA with the authority to continue MHA levels at "in-residence" levels through public health emergencies such as the current pandemic. This will allow eligible students to continue their programs of study remotely without fear of losing a significant portion of their housing allowance. Food and housing insecurity among students was already acute before this crisis,

particularly among those attending California's public higher education institutions, and a reduction in housing allowance for veteran students will exacerbate hardship and jeopardize program participation in the transition to remote instruction.

Lastly, we ask you to support our request to the VA that California institutions be provided with flexibility in administering programs of study to VA education and employment program beneficiaries. We recognize that these circumstances are exceptional, and that your office is receiving a significant number of requests for assistance, but we appreciate and thank you for your continued support for California public higher education.

Sincerely,

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