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# U.S. House of Representatives

## COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

335 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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September 28, 2018

The Honorable Paul R. Lawrence PhD.  
Under Secretary for Benefits  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Dr. Lawrence:

I thank you for your response to my letter of September 13, 2018 on the payment delays associated with the implementation of the Harry W. Colmery Veteran Educational Assistance Act of 2017. As the Committee and student veterans wait patiently for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to make necessary changes to your information technology (IT) system to appropriately implement section 107 of the law, I wanted to highlight another apparent IT system problem that has come to my attention. I have been sent information that describes delays in veterans receiving their correct living stipend for the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit. This delay does not appear to be related to the IT delays we have previously discussed. While these students appear to have now been paid a living stipend for the month of August, albeit incorrect due to the implementation of section 107, I am concerned that other students may end up facing the same issue.

The problem appears to stem from student certifications not properly transferring from the Long Term Solution (LTS) adjudication system to The Information Management System (TIMS). This misstep, I am told, results in the students' certification being lost and not making it to the payment program that provides the monthly living stipend. Please investigate this issue and if this problem is indeed causing delays and non-payments and provide me with an action plan on how you plan to mitigate this problem in the future.

In addition, I continue to be concerned about the current workload of education claims pending at VA regional processing offices. Publicly available data on VA's workload of education claims indicates that the number of all education claims pending on September 21, 2018 was 248,396. This represents an increase of 52%, or 84,625, more than in September 22, 2017. This increased workload is likely to result in processing delays for living stipend payments and other benefits for students. In addition to the aforementioned action plan, please provide me an update on your efforts to reduce the pending backlog of claims and ensure that students are being paid the benefits they have earned in a timely manner.

Please provide this information no later than close of business on Friday, October 5, 2018 and if you have any questions please contact Jon Clark or Grayson Westmoreland with the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity at (202) 225-3527.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Roe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David P. Roe, M.D.  
Chairman

DPR/jc

Cc: The Honorable Tim Walz, Ranking Member  
The Honorable Robert Willkie, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs