

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 24, 2022

The Honorable Denis McDonough  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

We write to request an update on the Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) and the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) plans for implementing the recently passed *Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program Restoration and Recovery Act* (S. 4089) once signed into law.

VRRAP was created by the *American Rescue Plan* (ARP) and offers benefits to veterans for education and training in high-demand jobs due to pandemic-related unemployment. In February 2022, the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) withdrew GI Bill and VRRAP approval from the fraudulent for-profit college Future Tech Career Institute (FTCI). The IDVA found that FTCI failed to provide quality curriculum and instruction. Within six months of VRRAP benefits becoming available, FTCI increased its enrollment from approximately 30 students to nearly 400 students, including 312 students receiving VRRAP benefits. At the same time, FTCI failed to increase its services and faculty. FTCI also falsely advertised that students would earn four to seven certifications. At the time of withdrawal of approval, only six students had passed one certification exam.

While we applaud the IDVA for their aggressive action to protect veterans and taxpayers, FTCI's predatory practices left hundreds of Illinois student veterans with their VRRAP benefits nearly exhausted and nothing to show for it. The ARP did not provide authority for the VA to restore VRRAP benefits to students in the case of school closure or loss of approval. We introduced the *VRRAP Restoration and Recovery Act* to allow the VA to restore VRRAP benefits and recoup VRRAP funds from fraudulent schools that abused taxpayer dollars and defrauded veterans.

Given the predatory history of the for-profit college industry, it is unlikely that FTCI is the only school taking advantage of the pandemic and additional federal dollars through VRRAP. To better understand how schools are using VRRAP funds, and the VA's plans for implementing the *VRRAP Restoration and Recovery Act*, we ask that you provide responses to the following questions by June 7, 2022:

1. How much VRRAP funding was received by FTCI before it lost eligibility?

2. Please provide a list of all postsecondary institutions that have enrolled student veterans using VRRAP.
3. What is VA doing to oversee this program and ensure that predatory practices like those found in IDVA's investigation of FTCI are not widespread?
4. How does the VA plan to implement the *VRRAP Restoration and Recovery Act* and ensure that veterans are aware of their restoration of benefits?

In addition to VRRAP students, FTCI enrolled 21 students using the GI Bill. Federal law already provides the VA the authority to restore benefits to GI participants in cases such as FTCI. Please provide an update on VA's progress in restoring these benefits and alerting affected veterans of that restoration.

We urge the VA to work with the IDVA to conduct direct outreach to affected Illinois veterans. We hope the VA will make every effort to quickly and aggressively use the authority provided in the bill to recoup VRRAP funds provided to FTCI prior to the IDVA's action.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to continuing to work with you to protect student veterans.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress

Cc: Terry Prince, Director, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs