



Durbin calls for higher education accreditation reform following GAO report

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and U.S. Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) today renewed calls for higher education accreditation reform following a new [Government Accountability Office \(GAO\) report](#) that found the process was in need of improvement.

According to education experts surveyed by GAO, the current accreditation system does not provide effective oversight of academic quality, which is the primary purpose of accreditation. The report identifies several weaknesses in the accreditation system, including:

- Accreditors are slow to revoke accreditations when they identify problems;
- The accreditation system creates conflicts of interest due to the fact that accreditors are funded and run by the institutions they accredit;
- Accreditors do not make use of student outcomes data in assessing a school's academic quality;
- The accreditation system does not provide students with useful information about the academic quality of accredited institutions.

“For too long our accreditation system in the United States has enabled predatory for-profit colleges to access billions in federal taxpayer-funded student financial aid while providing students with poor quality education. The fact that Corinthian Colleges and ITT Tech were accredited to the day they declared bankruptcy is ‘Exhibit A’.

Accreditation reform must be a part of any debate in Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act,” said Durbin.

In response to the report, the lawmakers announced their plan to reintroduce the Accreditation Reform and Enhanced Accountability Act, legislation that would directly

address some of the issues raised in the GAO report. The legislation would rebuild the college quality assurance system with stronger accountability to ensure that the federal government's growing investment in higher education actually helps students access a quality, affordable education.

Specifically the legislation would:

- Require accreditors to use student outcome data to evaluate colleges;
- Strengthen consumer protections by requiring accreditors to respond quickly to investigations related to fraud;
- Increase transparency and the information provided to students and families;
- Clean up conflicts-of-interest in college accreditation between accreditors and colleges they accredit;
- Add new tools for holding accreditors accountable when they fail to safeguard students from poor quality or predatory schools.

Durbin has long advocated for reform of the college accreditation system. In a March 2011 [letter](#) to 60 college and university accreditors around the country, Durbin asked for an explanation of the accreditation standards to better understand the role they play in holding colleges and universities to high academic standards.