

Durbin statement on California approving agency denying Ashford University's application for approval

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CHICAGO - U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today released the following statement after the California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education (CSAAVE) denied Ashford University's application to be approved in the state of California – a requirement for maintaining its eligibility to receive GI Bill benefits nationally:



“Ashford University has a long history of exploiting the men and women who have served our country in uniform in order to pocket millions in federal GI Bill education benefits. But now, the California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education has

said ‘enough is enough’ – denying this predatory company’s bid for approval in California and, with it, eligibility to continue participating in the GI Bill program nationwide. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs must now move quickly to stop the flow of GI Bill funds to Ashford and ensure veterans currently enrolled at Ashford have information about their educational options.”

In order to be eligible to receive GI Bill education benefits, an institution of higher education must be approved by the State Approving Agency (SAA) for the state in which its main campus is located. Last year, when Ashford closed its Iowa main campus, the Iowa SAA withdrew its approval of Ashford citing its lack of jurisdiction. Ashford challenged Iowa’s decision in federal court and lost earlier this summer.

Instead of seeking SAA approval in California, where Ashford’s parent company Bridgepoint is headquartered, Ashford sought and received approval from the Arizona SAA, which it asked the VA to recognize for purposes of GI Bill eligibility. In November 2017, VA rightfully found that Ashford’s approval by the Arizona SAA is “legally insufficient because the Arizona SAA lacks jurisdiction to approve Ashford” and that Ashford will lose GI Bill eligibility in 60 days if it fails to get approved by the California SAA.

Last week, Durbin and three Democratic senators [wrote](#) to CSAAVE and shared their many concerns about Ashford University’s predatory practices. In November, Durbin and eight other Democratic senators [urged](#) the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take steps to protect service members using Tuition Assistance (TA) benefits and veterans using GI Bill benefits at Ashford University in light of the company’s impending loss of VA Post-9/11 GI Bill approval.

In 2016, Ashford was the third largest recipient of TA benefits, enrolling 15,447 service members. According to DoD Instruction 1322.25, institutions of higher education must be approved for VA GI Bill funding in order to participate in DoD’s Voluntary Education Programs, including Tuition Assistance.