

Durbin Statement On Department Of Education Approving 1,600 Borrower Defense Claims For Former Westwood College Students

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The approved claims amount to \$16 million in relief for 488 Illinois student borrowers

SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today released the following statement on the U.S. Department of Education announcing that it has approved 1,600 borrower defense claims from former Westwood College students, amounting to \$53 million in relief. Of the 1,600 claims discharged, 488 belonged to Illinoisans, totaling \$16 million in relief. In 2012, then-Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a suit against Westwood College for using deceptive marketing in violation of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act. Westwood College deceived Illinois students about the costs and accreditation of its

criminal justice program, misleading students into believing that the program was highly respected by employers and would ensure them a job in law enforcement. Upon graduation, students found that Illinois law enforcement agencies did not recognize their Westwood education, leaving them drowning in student debt with no job prospects.

Durbin, alongside then-AG Madigan and current AG Kwame Raoul, has been continuously advocating for discharging these student borrower claims since the Obama Administration. In 2016, Durbin [urged](#) then-Secretary of Education John King to discharge the debt of defrauded Illinois Westwood students based on the evidence found in Illinois AG Madigan's suit. He repeatedly pressed former Secretary Betsy DeVos on the matter during the Trump Administration.

“After nearly a decade of advocating for these students, I am pleased to see the Department of Education finally move to right the wrongs of for-profit Westwood College. With the help of Attorney General Kwame Raoul, our students are finally getting the relief to which they are entitled. But today's victory is not the end of our fight. More Illinoisans are still waiting for their borrower defense claims to be processed and discharged. The Department of Education must make good on its promise to protect these students from predatory for-profit institutions that lie and mislead people into mountains of student debt without a career path.”

In his first [letter](#) to Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, Durbin called on him to promptly provide federal student loan debt relief to students defrauded by Westwood College citing Illinois' lawsuit and its conclusive evidence that the for-profit institution misled students.

Today, the Department of Education also approved the claims of 200 students who attended Marinello Schools of Beauty, amounting to \$2.2 million in relief, and 18 students who attended Court Reporting Institute, amounting to \$340,000 in relief.