

June 30, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
H.E.L.P Committee  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Chairwoman  
House Education & the Workforce Committee  
2176 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander and Chairwoman Foxx:

When the political decision was made by the Department of Education in 2016 to revoke ACICS' recognition we were looking at a potential impact on 690 schools serving over 320,000 students. Then, Ted Mitchell promised me that the Department would take every step necessary to protect the students and schools innocently impacted by their decision. As you all know, the Provincial Program Participation Agreements did just the opposite, imposing a series of deadlines and requirements on these schools which are often impossible to meet, simply because the other accreditors do not have the staff and resources to meet the current schedules of the PPPA.

Last week, one accreditor informed 45 campuses they were no longer continuing a review of their applications for new accreditation. The lateness of this notice – probably the result of inadequate staff and resources to make such determinations any earlier – has now left these 45 campuses in a crisis situation. Earlier this week, I was notified by a school in the upper Midwest that they have made the decision to teach through the current students without enrolling any new students simply because they cannot afford the costs and uncertainty of seeking other accreditation. Yesterday, we learned that a school from the south was informed that their appropriate notification to ACICS that they were voluntarily ending their ACICS accreditation to seek new accreditation with a different accreditor was met with a notice from the regional office of the Department of Education that they are suspended from participation in Title IV as of the date of such a notice. This happened despite this school, and many others believing ACICS schools have the right to withdraw their accreditation from the agency as they are pursuing avenues with other recognized accreditors as long as they are meeting the milestones of the PPPA and Addendum.

Since June of 2016, no less than 207 campuses accredited by ACICS have closed! And we know that more are in the process of doing so. As Congress waits for the Department to act; and the Department waits for the courts to act, nothing happens. In the meantime schools – and more importantly thousands of students – are being destroyed by the lack of action anywhere.

We need Congress to take the appropriate steps to extend the 18-month time period to provide schools and other accreditors the time required to properly consider transfer of accreditation without negatively impacting the students and schools who are the innocent victims of this political fight. The Congress must take action if we hope to prevent further damage to students' lives and careers.

Such action does not interfere with any actions the Department or the Courts will take regarding ACICS, so such action should be accomplished on a bipartisan basis.

I ask for your immediate help as we seek to avoid what is quickly becoming a crisis of opportunity for students, and a crisis of existence for our postsecondary career schools. Let me know how we can help.

Thanks for all you do.

Sincerely,



Steve Gunderson  
President and CEO