



**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
119TH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION**

December 16, 2025

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We thank you for the opportunity to present this statement for consideration at this hearing, which includes a review of recent critical failures in the delivery of higher education and veterans' education benefits. Veterans Education Success is a nonprofit organization with the mission of advancing higher education success for veterans, service members, and military families, and protecting the integrity and promise of the GI Bill and other federal education programs.

In this statement, we address this timely and important hearing topic, "Detrimental Delays: Reviewing Payment Failures in VA's Education Programs."

Unfortunately, payment delays are nothing new when it comes to education benefits at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). At the beginning of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was forced to issue emergency payments of up to \$3,000 to more than 25,000 veterans who were left without their funds.¹ The following year, delayed payments persisted, and nearly 50,000 veterans continued to experience difficulties with VA's failures.^{2,3}

More recently, while implementing the Forever GI Bill, VA experienced major IT failures in the fall of 2018.⁴ Housing payments for as many as 180,000 student veterans were delayed due to computer system updates and processing issues.⁵ A separate—but all too familiar—breakdown occurred in 2023 under the Biden Administration: VA's rollout of the digital enrollment system

¹ Philpott, Tom. "VA, lawmakers share blame for GI Bill delay," *Stars and Stripes*, (Oct. 17, 2009), <https://www.stripes.com/news/2009-10-17/military-update-va-lawmakers-share-blame-for-gi-bill-delay-1991955.html>.

² Daniel, Lisa. "VA Seeks to Eliminate Claims Processing Backlog, Official Says," Army.mil, (Dec. 18, 2010), https://www.army.mil/article/49646/va_seeks_to_eliminate_claims_processing_backlog_official_says.

³ Scholarships.com. "GI Bill Backlog Continues into Spring," *Scholarships.com Blog*, (Jan. 8, 2010), <https://www.scholarships.com/blog/gi-bill-backlog-continues-into-spring>.

⁴ Veterans of Foreign Wars. "Delayed Housing Payments Impacting 180,000 Student Veterans," *VFW Archives*, (Oct. 2018), <https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2018/10/delayed-housing-payments-impacting-180000-student-veterans>.

⁵ *Id.*

reportedly triggered an unexpected gap in housing payments.⁶ We testified that “VBA publicly announced a technical flaw that resulted in more than 280,000 student veterans’ being delayed on their monthly housing allowance (MHA) GI Bill payments. For nearly 4,000 of these veterans, VBA had to work with the U.S. Department of the Treasury (USDT) to mail hard-copy checks to the individuals to ensure continuity of on-time payments.”⁷

- **Problem:** VA’s education benefit systems continue to experience recurring payment failures that destabilize GI Bill students’ lives.
- **Solution:** Congress should require VA to implement reliable technical safeguards, transparent timelines, and actionable contingency plans for any failure to administer education benefits as otherwise anticipated.

The recurring theme of “technical glitches” that inevitably leaves thousands of GI Bill students missing their education benefits is simply unacceptable. While VA always has an excuse for the error, the impact of these debacles falls on veterans and their families, who are forced to shoulder the burden of VA’s repeated failures.

- **Problem:** VA’s repeated characterization of major payment disruptions as isolated “technical challenges” hides systemic weaknesses in planning and delivery of benefits.
- **Solution:** VA must adopt more rigorous testing of technology solutions and independent verification of efficacy. VA should also implement staged technology rollouts that prevent failures from reaching students in the first place.

Continuing the trend of IT failures and poor communication, VA once again left students scrambling this fall. Students who depend on Chapter 35 Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA) experienced a sudden interruption in their payments. These benefits are fundamental to whether a student can remain enrolled, maintain housing stability, and cover the daily costs of attendance. When those funds disappear, the consequences are immediate and personal, as we saw over the course of this fall semester.

In Florida, the Hayward family found themselves caught in this payment breakdown.⁸ Wayne Hayward is a Marine Corps veteran who is permanently and totally disabled from his service. His daughter, Rachel, had prepared to begin training as a commercial diver and underwater welder in Texas, organizing her move and relying on Chapter 35 payments to make it possible. When her benefit did not arrive, and the GI Bill hotline was shut down, there was no clear way for the family to understand what had gone wrong or how long the disruption might last. Months of planning suddenly hinged on whether an IT malfunction at VA could be resolved in time for her to start school.

⁶ Garcia, Joseph. “Update on Post 9/11 GI Bill MHA Delayed Payment for March 2023,” *Veterans Benefits Administration*, (Apr. 19, 2023), <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVAVBA/bulletins/355e1e1>.

⁷ Veterans Education Success. “Statement for the Record Submitted to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs 118th Congress, First Session,” (Apr. 26, 2023), <https://vetsedsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Veterans-Education-Success-Statement-For-the-Record-SVAC-4-26-2023.pdf>.

⁸ Hersey, Linda F. “Computer ‘Glitch’ Delays Higher-Ed Payments for Veterans’ Dependents and Survivors,” *Stars and Stripes*, (Oct. 16, 2025), <https://www.stripes.com/veterans/2025-10-16/veterans-gi-bill-payments-shutdown-19448904.html>.

Jonathan Mackey, a senior at Southeastern Louisiana University, publicly described how his benefit amount dropped without warning.⁹ He received \$839 for the month, which barely covered his rent, leaving him with roughly \$13 for groceries and other expenses. He explained that he was trying to focus on completing his degree while hoping someone at VA would eventually answer the phone and explain why his housing support had been reduced.

Another student wrote to us to describe the difficult position she faced as a result of the delays: "I have not received one of my payments and it's almost 90 days. I had my vehicle repossessed last week and I am facing eviction with late fees that are mounting[.] I am attending out of state school and I have no family near me. I am in dire need of assistance please help me. I can't get any answers from the emails I sent and the phone calls that go unanswered. I checked the VA benefits website and it shows that my benefits are eligible, but they have not issued any payments. This goes back to August. This is affecting my life tremendously."

What made this situation more damaging was not simply the payment disruption, but the utter lack of communication. VA was aware in August about the risk of payment delays.¹⁰ VA later described the payment failure as being the result of a technical malfunction of their IT rollout.¹¹ Once students became aware of missing payments, no one could get answers because the GI Bill hotline was classified as non-essential during the federal government shutdown.

- **Problem:** Students, families, institutions, advocates, and Congress were left uninformed, even though VA knew about the risk of payment delays weeks before they occurred.
- **Solution:** VA should be required to provide proactive, plain-language notifications to students, schools, and oversight entities whenever payment risks are identified.

Congressional staff contacted organizations like ours to verify reports that GI Bill payments were not being disbursed. That outreach underscores the core issue: stakeholders outside VA were forced to determine the extent of the problem on their own because VA did not communicate it openly, even though it knew the risks to families. The absence of clear information created confusion for schools and exposed students to housing insecurity.

It is also important to view this incident in context. As discussed earlier, this was the third significant technology transition involving GI Bill payments in recent years that has caused considerable payment delays during implementation. Each was scheduled at the beginning of an academic term, when even minor interruptions can quickly lead to adverse outcomes for students. Modernizing systems is essential, but modernization that jeopardizes the delivery of core benefits is misguided. When the scheduling of VA's actions guarantees maximum disruption if anything goes wrong, the planning has already fallen short.

- **Problem:** VA continues to schedule major system changes at the start of academic terms, when even minor disruptions would create maximum harm.

⁹ Dille, Grace. "VA Tech Issue Delays GI Bill Payments for Thousands of Students," *MeriTalk*, (Nov. 10, 2025), https://meritalk.com/articles/va-tech-issue-delays-gi-bi_leaving_him_with_roughly_13_forl-payments-for-thousands-of-students/.

¹⁰ Krupnick, Matt. "'Complete nightmare': Student veterans, advisers say VA cuts are derailing their educations," *The Hechinger Report*, (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://hechingerreport.org/complete-nightmare-student-veterans-advisers-say-va-cuts-are-derailing-their-educations/>.

¹¹ See note 8.

- **Solution:** Congress should direct VA to avoid releasing education benefit system upgrades during critical enrollment or disbursement windows and require independent certification of readiness before launch.

There are practical steps VA should adopt to ensure this is avoided moving forward. Education benefits delivery must be treated as an essential function that does not pause when other parts of government do. A continuity plan is needed so that if one system fails or is offline, another is ready to take over. Institutions should receive clear guidance to avoid penalizing students for late payments due to circumstances beyond their control. Most importantly, when VA becomes aware of a significant risk to on-time payments, it should proactively share that information with students, institutions, policymakers, and advocates before financial harm occurs.

Student veterans, survivors, and their families do not view their education benefits as optional. Oftentimes, they plan their lives around these benefits because that is what they were told they could count on. VA must build on the lessons learned from these failures to reestablish trust with GI Bill students.

- **Problem:** Without stronger accountability and basic execution on benefits delivery, VA will continue to erode student trust in the GI Bill.
- **Solution:** Congress should strengthen oversight requirements, mandate transparent performance metrics, and ensure that students are not left bearing the cost of VA's failures.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for your continued oversight as VA works to restore confidence in its delivery of education benefits. Veterans Education Success stands ready to support the Subcommittee in any way that helps protect the students and families who depend on these programs.

In summary, the five solutions we propose are for VA to:

- Implement reliable technical safeguards, transparent timelines, and actionable contingency plans for any failure to administer education benefits as otherwise anticipated;
- Adopt more rigorous testing of technology solutions and independent verification of efficacy; implement staged technology rollouts that prevent failures from reaching students in the first place;
- Provide proactive, plain-language notifications to students, schools, and oversight entities whenever payment risks are identified;
- Avoid releasing education benefit system upgrades during critical enrollment or disbursement windows and require independent certification of readiness before launch;
- Finally, for Congress to strengthen oversight requirements, mandate transparent performance metrics, and ensure that students are not left bearing the cost of VA's failures.

Finally, as the higher education industry continues to evolve in these unique times, we also emphasize the importance of maintaining high standards of quality. Student veterans, taxpayers, and Congress must expect the best outcomes from the use of hard-earned GI Bill benefits. We look forward to discussing and reviewing these topics and are grateful for the continued opportunity to collaborate on them.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our views with the Subcommittee, and look forward to continued collaboration.

Information Required by Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives

Pursuant to Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives, Veterans Education Success has not received any federal grants in Fiscal Year 2025, nor has it received any federal grants in the two previous Fiscal Years.