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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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December 5, 2023

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
 Secretary
 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 810 Vermont Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

As my colleagues and I have expressed in our July 14th, August 17th, October 26th and October 30th letters, we have grown increasingly concerned as the Digital G.I. Bill (DGIB) project has sunk into turmoil. This once ambitious and long overdue effort to streamline processing of veterans' education benefits, institute automation, retire outmoded legacy systems, and add capabilities in a rapid, cost-effective fashion is perilously close to failure.

For reasons that Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) officials and Accenture executives have never fully and candidly explained to Congress, the DGIB system has been stuck in a half-complete status throughout this year while its error-ridden automation has often impeded, rather than helped, VA Education Service employees do their jobs.

November 29th, which was VA's own deadline to put in place a renegotiated contract to attempt to salvage the project's schedule, has come and gone, and at the 11th hour VA signed a 30-day contract extension with Accenture. This is yet another band-aid on a gaping wound. Many basic questions about the DGIB project—that should have been answered months or years ago—remain. Why has progress stalled? What exactly does the contract renegotiation seek to fix? When will these changes happen, and when does it become too late to salvage the schedule?

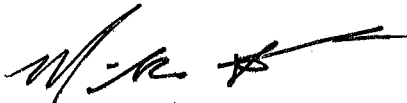
Even more concerning, Chairman Rosendale's July 14th request for the DGIB contract documents and my October 30th request for the same have been ignored. After two different subcommittee hearings seeking to understand the root of the project's problems and even after VA leaders determined there is no choice but to abandon the existing contract, VA has still not provided the contract documents. I trust you understand the personal responsibility that the Committee members and I have to ensure that student veterans get the most modern, efficient tools to access the education benefits they have earned.

On top of that, the DGIB project has expended more than \$750 million over the last three years, and VA and the MITRE Corporation have repeatedly delayed an updated life cycle cost estimate. We still do not know whether, and by how much, the project is set to exceed its high-end estimate of \$2.38 billion.

This project is a disappointing example in a long line of disappointing examples of mismanagement, contractors that perform disastrous work but continue to get paid, lack of accountability, and front-line employees who bear the brunt. Since the rollout of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill in 2009, VA has attempted and failed multiple times to modernize its education benefit systems. The current attempt, the DGIB project, is hanging by a thread and is on the cusp of being added to the heap of past failures. If VA has any information to provide demonstrating how DGIB can be salvaged, I ask that you provide it **immediately**, along with answers to all outstanding Committee letters and staff questions.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Bost', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

MIKE BOST
Chairman

Cc: The Honorable Mark Takano, Ranking Member