

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 27, 2018

Senator Lamar Alexander
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, DC

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

We write today to request you to hold a hearing in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) on the nomination of Mr. Robert “Bob” L. King to become the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the United States Department of Education (ED or “the Department”).

The HELP Committee has jurisdiction over the Department, including the Department’s higher education programs, as well as the Department’s implementation of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Given the Department’s higher education policies under the leadership of Secretary DeVos and the impact of those policies on America’s colleges, students, veterans, and taxpayers, we believe the HELP committee must exercise its constitutional duty to fully perform our advise and consent role with regard to this important position.

The Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education has leadership and oversight responsibilities for the three major program units in the Department’s Office of Postsecondary Education: Higher Education Programs; International and Foreign Language Education; and Policy, Planning and Innovation. These program units administer grant programs focused on college readiness, campus-based child care, graduate fellowships, and programs supporting low-income, first-generation students, and individuals with disabilities, including federal TRIO and GEAR UP programs.

This office also oversees the development of federal higher education policies and regulations, including policies and regulations impacting federal student aid recipients such as Gainful Employment and Borrower Defense to Repayment.

Critically, this office also oversees higher education accreditation at the Department and administers the review process for accreditation agencies to ensure that federally-recognized accreditors adequately perform their quality assurance and Title IV gatekeeping responsibilities in accordance with federal standards and regulations. The actions of this office truly impact almost every student at a college or university in this country.

As student debt continues to rise, and as college becomes more and more unaffordable and inaccessible for hardworking Americans, it is critical that the Senate confirm someone for this important post with a specific and compelling vision for the role the Department should play in helping Americans struggling with student loan debt and making college more affordable, accessible, and accountable to students and taxpayers, and safe for all students.


The Department's recent actions and higher education policies have directly and indirectly harmed students and deserve greater scrutiny in the United States Senate. Since the confirmation of Secretary DeVos, the Department has rolled back critical protections for taxpayers, veterans, and students—including student loan borrowers—while making it easier for predatory colleges to take advantage of students and veterans by loading them up with mountains of debt for useless degrees, often breaking the law to do so.

The Department has also made it more difficult for students and families to access critical information about colleges and universities, and it recently reinstated a negligent college accreditor that allowed Corinthian College and ITT Technical Institute to continue to enroll students and draw down federal taxpayer dollars until both institutions went bankrupt. Given these policies, it is imperative that Mr. King publically commit to a specific plan to protect students and veterans from predatory colleges and to ensure that colleges and universities provide a high-quality education to students that maximizes students' opportunities for success.


Finally, the Department has proposed controversial policies regarding campus sexual assault that have alarmed victims and survivors, drawn criticism from colleges, and would bolster the rights of those accused of campus sexual assault.

For these reasons and others, the American people deserve to know where Mr. King stands on these issues. We look forward to a prompt hearing on this important nomination.


Sincerely,




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



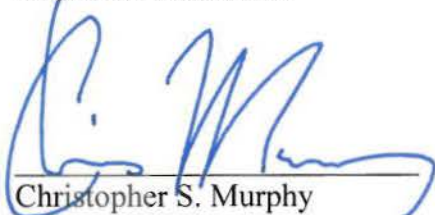
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator




Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator