

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 1, 2019

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Secretary DeVos:

We are deeply troubled by the Department of Education's (Department) failure to cooperate with an important Congressional investigation being conducted by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott into the Department's role in Dream Center Education Holding's (DCEH) accreditation misrepresentation at its Illinois Institute of Art and Art Institute of Colorado campuses.<sup>1</sup>

On July 17, Chairman Scott first publicly wrote to you requesting cooperation with his investigation.<sup>2</sup> In that letter, he revealed new details about the Department's role in DCEH's accreditation misrepresentation—which call into question representations the Department, including you and Principal Deputy Undersecretary Diane Auer Jones, made to members of Congress in writing<sup>3</sup> and under oath.<sup>4</sup>

Now, in a letter sent to you just this week, Chairman Scott reveals that you have “failed to substantively respond” to his July 17 letter and that you are not cooperating with the investigation. What's more, his letter revealed shocking new evidence that the Department may have:

- Made at least \$10.7 million in improper federal taxpayer-funded payments to DCEH at a time when it was legally prohibited from participating in Title IV; and

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<sup>1</sup> Senator Richard J. Durbin, Letter to Higher Learning Commission President Barbara Gellman-Danley, re: Dream Center Education Holdings accreditation (June 26, 2018).

<https://www.durbin.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Dream%20Center%20Letter%206.26.18.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, Letter to Secretary Betsy DeVos, re: Dream Center Education Holdings (July 17, 2019).

<https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Chairman%20Scott%20Letter%20to%20ED%20re%20Dream%20Center.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education Responses to Sen. Durbin Questions for the Record to Secretary DeVos (May 28, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Examining For-Profit College Oversight and Student Debt: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, 116 Cong. (2019).

<https://oversight.house.gov/legislation/hearings/examining-for-profit-college-oversight-and-student-debt>

- Retroactively granted non-profit status to the Illinois Institute of Art and Art Institute of Colorado campuses to cover up these improper payments.<sup>5</sup>

If true, this represents a serious breach of the public trust and failure to uphold the laws and regulations governing the disbursement of federal student aid funds. It means the Department is directly responsible for additional students being harmed and taxpayer dollars being wasted at Illinois Institute of Art and Colorado Art Institute.

You have thus far impeded Congress from gathering the full picture of this matter and left the public record pointing to Department misconduct. At this point, transparency is your only option. We call on you to immediately and fully cooperate with Chairman Scott's July 17 and October 22 requests and personally direct the cooperation of Department officials and staff.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

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<sup>5</sup> Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, Letter to Secretary Betsy DeVos, re: Dream Center Education Holdings (October 22, 2019).