

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 16, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

We are writing about your recent notification that the Internal Revenue Service Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) is currently unavailable. We appreciate the initial actions taken by the U.S. Department of Education (Department) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to address this issue, and we are writing to obtain further information about the cause and scope of the outage and the steps the Department and the IRS will take to assist students and families that are impacted.

The DRT is an integral part of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the process that student loan borrowers use when applying for and recertifying their income-driven repayment (IDR) plans on StudentLoans.gov. The availability of the DRT saves families and individuals time, streamlines the application process, and improves accuracy of applications. Unfortunately, the DRT appears to have been unavailable since the end of the first week in March, and the joint statement indicates that it will be “several weeks” until the DRT will be back online. The loss of the DRT could discourage many eligible low-income students from applying for aid or IDR plans altogether.

We are requesting a staff briefing from you that includes the appropriate staff from all the relevant Department offices involved in this situation to obtain further information about the nature of the current outage. We would like to hear about the timeline of events from the start of the outage to an estimated reinstatement date; steps the Department is taking to remedy the situation for students, borrowers and parents; and the actions the Department will take to protect applicants’ data privacy and security during and after this outage. We would like this briefing to occur before next **Friday, March 24** and request that you bring copies of the Department’s policies and procedures regarding data privacy and security issues.

Thank you for your attention to this request and we look forward to your reply.

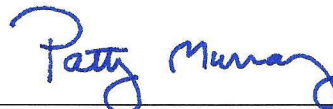
Sincerely,



LAMAR ALEXANDER
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions



VIRGINIA FOXX
Chairwoman, House Committee on Education
& the Workforce



PATTY MURRAY
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions



ROBERT C. “BOBBY” SCOTT
Ranking Member, House Committee on Education
& the Workforce