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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

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April 6, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Thomas M. Brady

Director of the Department of Defense Education Activity
United States Department of Defense
3010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-3010

Dear Mr. Brady:

I write to you today regarding my continued concerns about alleged wasteful travel spending within the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). My office has been investigating these claims since July of 2018. In furtherance of this investigation, my staff communicated nine additional questions via email on April 10, 2019, concerning allegations raised in a July 2018 whistleblower complaint.¹ These questions sought additional information regarding two DoDEA-sponsored trips to Hawaii. However, on July 8, 2019, I received a letter from Principal Deputy Virginia S. Penrod stating that the Department of Defense (DoD) “feels it has already provided fulsome information to adequately resolve these concerns.”² With all due respect to DoD, it is my congressional duty to conduct oversight over the Executive Branch, and thus, it is within my discretion to determine when I have been provided with sufficient information to conclude an investigation. To that end, I trust that DoDEA will continue to cooperate with my office as I reiterate the questions that my staff posed to you in an email dated April 10, 2019.³

In order to continue my investigation into the alleged wasteful travel spending within DoDEA, I request that you answer the following questions, in writing, no later than April 24, 2020.

1. What was the total DoDEA travel budget for FY2019 and what is the travel budget for FY2020?

¹ On file with author.

² Letter from Virginia S. Penrod, Principal Deputy, Office of the Assistant Sec’y of Def., to Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Chairman, S. Comm. on Fin. (July 5, 2019).

³ On file with author.

2. Since FY2017, how many trips has DoDEA sponsored in which ten or more staff members participated in the sponsored travel?
 - a. Please provide the names, dates, travel locations, and total cost for all trips that include ten or more staff members.
3. What does “permissive, no cost” mean with respect to the information provided to me in previous communications?
4. What is the Harvard Collaboration? What is DoDEA’s role in the Harvard Collaboration?
5. What was the genesis of the meetings with Hawaiian public school officials?
6. Did DoDEA initiate these meetings with Hawaiian public schools officials?
 - a. If there is an official invitation from Hawaiian public school officials, please provide a copy to the Committee.
 - b. If DoDEA responded to an official invitation from Hawaiian public school officials, please provide a copy to the Committee.
7. Documents provided to my office show that you made a trip to Hawaii from February 20, 2018 to March 1, 2018.
 - a. What was the purpose and nature of this trip?
 - b. Did DoDEA have any contact with Hawaiian public school officials during this visit? If so, what was the subject of these conversations?
 - c. Outside of Hawaii public school officials, who did DoDEA officials meet with during this trip to Hawaii?
 - d. Please provide a full, detailed itinerary of your scheduled visit to Hawaii for the above dates.
8. Documents provided to my office show that you made “PACOM office calls” during your visit from February 20, 2018 to March 1, 2018. Did these meetings pertain to establishing DoDEA schools in Hawaii?
9. Documents provided to my office show that you made a second trip to Hawaii from October 8, 2018 to October 22, 2018.
 - a. What was the purpose and nature of this trip?

- b. Did DoDEA have any contact with Hawaiian public school officials during this visit? If so, what was the subject of these conversations?
 - c. Outside of Hawaii public school officials, who did DoDEA officials meet with during this trip to Hawaii?
 - d. Please provide a full, detailed itinerary of your scheduled visit to Hawaii for the above dates.
10. The travel spreadsheet provided to my office indicates a “school tour w/PACOM J1 and Hawaiian School’s Sup.” during your trip from October 8, 2018 to October 22, 2018. What role did PACOM J1 play in your travel to Hawaii?
11. Does the Department have an official policy on building or establishing schools in Hawaii? If so, please provide a copy of this policy to the Committee.
12. Have you ever discussed establishing DoDEA schools on any of the Hawaiian Islands with any Hawaiian public official?
13. Have you or any other DoDEA employee made any other trips to Hawaii, outside of those two trips described above?

My staff has been more than accommodating with DoDEA in patiently waiting for responses that, at some points, took months to produce. Therefore, I expect a full production of answers to my questions no later than April 24, 2020. If DoDEA anticipates a full production of answers to my questions to take longer than April 24, 2020, I request that you notify my office, in writing, so that a reasonable extension of time can be discussed.

Should you have questions, please contact Quinton Brady of my Committee staff at (202) 224-4515. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance