

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITH RESPECT TO
H.R. 4508, REAUTHORIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Scott,

I write today, as Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and as Co-Chair of the National Guard and Reserve Components Caucus, to bring to your attention a number of provisions in the education bill under your consideration that would negatively impact our veterans. As a country, one of the ways we have consistently shown our commitment to serving those who have served us is by providing them the opportunity to obtain higher education. Our country's commitment to this, however, must not end at simply providing veterans with education benefits but must also include being vigilant about protecting their benefits from being targeted by predatory actors and ensuring that their benefits can, in fact, be used to help them achieve better lives. This vigilance is also about being a good steward of taxpayer dollars. Therefore, I hope you will strongly consider the following ways in which the following provisions place the education prospects of America's heroes at risk before reporting the bill out of Committee.

Section 104. Regulatory Relief

This section repeals the gainful employment rule, the borrower defense rule, and the definition of credit hour. It further prohibits the U.S. Secretary of Education from regulating these issues in the future. Such moves drastically reduce the federal oversight available to ensure that our student veterans are enrolling in quality programs that do not use predatory practices to take advantage of the readily available federal dollars we provide our veterans for education. When such bad actor schools defraud veterans of their GI Bill benefits, they also defraud the taxpayer. As the recent cases of ITT Tech and Corinthian have shown, we need more oversight of institutions that engage in predatory practices and student abuses, not less.

Section 451. Termination of Federal Direct Loan Program under Part D and Other Conforming Amendments

The termination of the Federal Direct Loan Program also effectively terminates the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program as PSLF is absent from the ONE Loan program created by this bill. The PSLF program allows those who work in public service, which

includes the Armed Forces, to have their student loans forgiven after 10 years. Many veterans choose to continue serving the public after their time in the military by working in government, as first responders, and as law enforcement officials. Veterans are also particularly well-suited for these roles as the jobs often build upon the skills and experience that veterans obtained in the military. In failing to continue PSLF, this bill eliminates an important benefit for veterans who pursue higher education to help them continue serving the country after their time in the military.

Section 703. Programs for Students with Disabilities

This section eliminates two programs and cuts funding to two centers that collect and disseminate critical information about students with disabilities in higher education. Grants that support training postsecondary faculty, staff, and administrators in supporting and educating students with disabilities are also eliminated. This section also eliminates the Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities, which improve the availability of accessible materials for students with disabilities. Our veterans often return from serving our country with disabilities. Helping these veterans access higher education so they can achieve fulfilling careers and lives despite their disabilities is one way we repay their sacrifice. By cutting these vital programs and grants, this bill dishonors that sacrifice by making it harder for disabled veterans to rebuild their lives.

These provisions will have serious consequences for the ability of our veterans to use higher education after their service to build their civilian lives and continue contributing to society. Student veterans earned their education benefits by giving years of their lives in service and often by placing their lives in danger. We owe it to them to safeguard those benefits and to do what we can to maximize their education opportunities. I hope the Committee will seriously consider the impact that these provisions will have on our active duty and reserve servicemembers, veterans, and military families. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Tim Walz
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs