

California State Assembly Higher Education Committee
Hearing on AB 1343 – Revising the 90/10 Rule
Testimony by Stephanie Stiefel
April 9th, 2019

My name is Stephanie Stiefel. I am here today to tell my story in the hope that what happened to me will not happen to anyone else.

When I was 18 years old and attending the University of South Florida, I attended a career fair to look for employment outside of minimum wage retail jobs. The International Academy of Design and Technology was at this particular career fair, and their counselors spoke highly of their program. I told the counselors at IADT that I was struggling with the large class sizes at USF and they told me that the class sizes at IADT were small and that getting one-on-one time with professors was simple. These counselors also made the program at IADT sound appealing because they said graduating from IADT would provide a promising, lucrative career in big name design firms. At that point, I was interested, so I set up a tour of the school. During the tour I was told that it was a great school and even if it did not work out, or if I did not like it, all of the classes would transfer to any other school that I wanted to attend. So shortly after, in October of 2005, I enrolled.

I started taking classes and felt like many of the classes I was taking were just a check in the box. I was not trained on some of the advanced software that was needed for certain projects that were assigned, I was given minimal instructions, and it did not matter if the work that myself and my peers turned in was stellar or just terrible, we would all receive passing grades. Some of the teachers weren't experts in their field as I was led to believe. I stayed enrolled in the program

and was unaware that the problems that I was experiencing during my time at IADT would not lead to a job in interior design.

After over a year of applying for interior design jobs, I was forced to take a job working for my family's logistics company just so I could pay my student loans. The loans became so overwhelming that I made the decision to join the Army to get the benefit of having my loans paid off. Unfortunately, after joining the Army, I quickly found out that because IADT was not properly accredited, I did not qualify for loan forgiveness. So, I then tried to use my military benefits to start nursing classes and make a plan for my future career. When I tried to enroll, I was told that the general education classes that I took at IADT were not transferrable. I was devastated because I was told that all of these classes would transfer. It turns out that I now have \$140,000 in student loans and a bachelor's degree in interior design that is worth nothing more than a piece of paper.

I am here today to ask the committee to protect students from ending up with a mountain of debt for low quality education and a degree that is worth nothing on the job market.