



VETERANS EDUCATION SUCCESS

Prepared Testimony of Ramond Curtis

Before the New Jersey Senate Higher Education Committee

Trenton, NJ

August 17, 2020

S.1851: State student assistance or other employment/training-concerns eligibility

Position: Favorable

Chairwoman Cunningham, Vice Chairman Gopal, and Members of the Committee:

Veterans Education Success is a non-profit organization with a mission to advance higher education success for veterans, service members, and military families, and to protect the integrity and promise of the GI Bill and other federal education programs.

In addition to research, providing free case work to students having trouble with the GI Bill or impacted by predatory schools, and elevating the voices of students to share with policy makers both their positive and negative experiences in higher education, we are focused on addressing ways to increase the continued academic success of military-connected students in their pursuit of their academic goals.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on the pending legislation before the Committee:

S.1851: State student assistance or other employment/training-concerns eligibility

On behalf of the student servicemembers, veterans, their family members, and survivors that we represent, we thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of S1851. This bill will limit the distribution of state-funded student aid to institutions that do not require students to enter into an arbitration agreement before enrollment.

Veterans Education Success has found that enrollment contracts are increasingly being used by certain postsecondary institutions to limit the rights of the students that we serve. Restrictive

clauses are often an attempt by institutions to provide legal cover for unscrupulous marketing and lower-quality education.

These clauses prohibit students or former students from going to court to seek resolution of any complaints. Instead, the institution requires students to take complaints to an arbitrator in a private, binding process that fails to properly inform the public of the harm that the individual student has suffered. It is an increasingly common way of preventing critical information from reaching the marketplace, and Virginia should prevent them from being used on its students.

As our nation continues to battle COVID and consequently a recession, unemployment numbers continue to stay significantly high. Similar to the last recession our country faced, we expect to see a large number of students return to post-secondary education. Also, like the last recession, we have also seen an increased uptick in the number of predatory schools targeting underserved student populations such as student veterans and transitioning servicemembers. S1851 provides New Jersey the opportunity to do what is right and protect students from this type of predatory behavior and the already limited funds available to them. We ask that you vote yes on S1851.