

**Tasha Berkhalter
Testimony
U.S. Education Department
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My name is Tasha Berkhalter and I am an Army veteran from Lima, Ohio. I would like to tell you a bit of my story. After serving in the Army for more than 5 years, I was Honorably Discharged for medical reasons. I wanted to find a path in life to make things better for myself and my family. My goal was to pursue a career in the FBI as a Criminal Behavioral Analysts and Forensics. I went to ITT Tech from 2006-2010 earning a Bachelor's Degree of Science. At the time, ITT Tech seemed like a good option. It was advertised that they had a "high tech" criminal justice program and admissions staff told me that the GI Bill would cover my full tuition. I was told that they assist in job placement after graduation and I would have a job in my field in no time.

The first red flag I encountered was when I tried transferring to a different school my sophomore year. I was told not only that my credits would not transfer and the books we were using were outdated, but that I would have to start completely over. After being frustrated and speaking to my chair, I relied yet again on the promises ITT Tech made to me and I decided to stay and finish my degree. Unfortunately my trust put me back in a position to continually be lied to. ITT Tech wasn't "high tech," at all, yet I still had to foot the bill for a low quality education. The GI Bill did not cover my tuition and I had to take out additional federal and personal student loans to pay for my schooling.

As I stand here today, I currently owe about \$100,000 in student loans. \$100,000 in student loans for a degree that employers don't take seriously. Whenever I told employers at job interviews I went to ITT Tech, I was shown the door. And I wasn't the only one. I graduated with about 50 students. Of that 50, I know of only two that have been able to find jobs in their fields, and those jobs don't even require degrees. Being married with four children has been a challenge because it's hard to provide a comfortable life for them and keep a stable home with consistency because I cannot find a job in my field. I used my whole GI Bill, yet they still made me take out additional

loans, and I still have no real degree. No GI Bill to go back to school and an extreme amount of debt. I have dealt with stress, anxiety and depression over this whole ordeal for years. It's been a strain on my marriage, my children and our livelihood. Sometimes, I don't feel capable of being a good mother or wife because of these issues that were caused by the deceitful promises from this school.

I didn't just miss my one shot to use my GI Bill, I'm overwhelmed by my student loan debt. I've lost homes, cars, moved from state to state, had to live with my parents and inlaws, I've lost time and sometimes, I feel, my sanity. Student veterans should not be left to pay for schools that are misleading and deceiving them. I hope the Education Department will take my story and countless others. These schools should be heavily regulated and not receive any federal funding, especially GI Bills, when they mislead, deceptively recruit and then leave veterans with worthless degrees, or no degrees at all.

Thank you very much for your time.