



Tasha Berkhalter, Veteran
Testimony
U.S. Education Department
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Good afternoon. My name is Tasha Berkhalter and I am an Army veteran from Lima, Ohio. 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. Their 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 I was told that my credits would not transfer and the books we were using were outdated. They said 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.

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 when I cannot find a job in my field. I used my whole GI Bill, but they still made me take out additional loans. 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 and my children and our finances.

I didn't just miss my one shot to use my GI Bill, I was 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 had about \$100,000 in student loans and applied for borrower defense. Thankfully, after a few years of waiting, my borrower defense application was approved on September 7th. I am extremely grateful and I hope the Education Department will hear my story and make sure there is a fair and timely borrower defense process in place for other student veterans.

Thank you very much for your time.