

Jarrold Thoma

Testimony

U.S Education Department

November 2021

Good afternoon, my name is Jarrod Thoma, I am a Veteran of the U.S. Army, from Colorado Springs, Colorado. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my testimony today. I am here to tell you why, from my own experience, the United States government needs to regulate bad schools that take federal taxpayer dollars like the GI Bill.

I earned my education through years of service and sacrifice during my enlistment. After my discharge from the Army, I was eager to pursue my lifelong passion for electronics by earning a degree in engineering. With that in mind, I decided to enroll in DeVry University. After enrollment at DeVry, it didn't take long for me to realize that this for-profit college was failing to deliver on many of the promises recruiters had made to me. In particular, after transferring from one DeVry campus to another, it became clear to me that the school was implementing cost-saving measures that negatively impacted the quality of education being delivered. I saw that the quality of course materials and equipment used for instruction were subpar and not as advertised, and that standards varied from branch to branch. When I realized the dramatic reduction in quality, I alerted my professors, and then school staff members.

Although DeVry was more than happy to cash in all of my GI Bill benefits, my complaints about the quality of materials and instructions fell on deaf ears. When I tried to transfer, I was told by both a public university and a community college that they would accept only my general education credits – even though DeVry had stated that their credits would transfer. As I was starting to accumulate debt, including \$52,000 in additional student loans, I made the decision to complete my engineering degree at DeVry. However, upon entering the job market, I quickly found that a degree from a for-profit college was not worth the paper it was printed on and it actually hurt my job prospects. Through hard work, and a little luck, I was finally able to secure an engineering position after two and a half years.

Given these challenges, along with the many other hurdles that veterans already face, I cannot stress enough the need for regulatory protections for not just military-connected students, but all students from predatory practices by these terrible education corporations posing as colleges and universities. Not long after I graduated from DeVry with what turned out to be a worthless degree and subpar training, other bad schools

went bankrupt and left other students and veterans in even worse spots. Education companies like ITT Technical Institute and Corinthian were run into the ground, despite having taken millions of taxpayer dollars, which shows the need for regulations to protect students like myself from lies, fraud, and predatory recruiting and marketing tactics. While my loans have been placed in forbearance, they still have become a financial burden. This is not the position I envisioned for myself or my family after serving this country and sacrificing to earn my benefits. If you want to support the men and women in uniform, I ask that you take a hard look at schools like DeVry that take taxpayer money, including veterans benefits, but don't deliver the quality education that is promised.

Thank you for your time.