

Testimony of Veteran Dylan Contrino
U.S. Education Department's Negotiated Regulatory Rulemaking Panel
December 2021

My name is Dylan Contrino and I'm here to tell you about my experience at Lincoln Technical as a student veteran. I hope sharing my story will prevent other veterans from going through the stress, confusion and heartbreak caused by for-profits like Lincoln Tech.

My classmate Jesus Abarca and I got into the welding program at Lincoln and told them we would be using our GI Bills. The school quickly enrolled us and said we didn't need to provide our certificate of eligibility, just our DD214s. This was the first red flag.

We knew veterans using the GI Bill get a stipend for books, so we asked the school when we'd receive it. They said we'd get it once classes started. This was the second red flag.

When classes started and our benefits still hadn't shown up, the school told us they were being audited by the VA, but we would receive our money at the end of the month.

Around the two and a half month mark, the school said instead of waiting on the VA, they could give us a scholarship. We did get checks, but it only got us through one month. So every week we went back to the administrators. They'd brush us off, telling us they were "too busy" to help us. They didn't take our situation seriously.

Then they said we'd get our money by November 14th. I am certain this was never the case and that they told us what we wanted to hear so we would leave them alone.

Needless to say, the money never arrived, so the school said they'd take out loans on our behalf. They said our VA benefits would arrive before any interest accrued on the loans. At this point, what choice did we have?

The school told us our loans totalled \$4,700. But this was another lie. The total was really \$9,500 -- almost double what they'd said. Worse, the head of the school denied knowing we were counting on our GI Bill benefits to put us through the program. When we asked for the paperwork proving we enrolled under the GI Bill, they said -- and this is a direct quote -- "We shredded it. I think we shredded it."

We learned that the welding program had never been accredited by the VA and the school enrolled us under false pretenses. When I enrolled, I didn't know Lincoln was a "for-profit" school. But now it's clear that the school just wanted to get paid. They didn't care that they put us in debt and decimated our savings waiting for benefits -- ones we earned through our service -- that would never come.

I'm hoping this panel can make changes to rules and regulations governing these schools so that no other veteran has to go through this.