

Good afternoon. My name is Jenica King and I'm an Army veteran and the spouse of an active duty servicemember.

I used my GI Bill to attend Ashford University. One reason I went there is that they stressed that they were "military friendly" and that my GI Bill would cover all my tuition. I trusted them so, in December 2016, I enrolled in the bachelor's degree program for Psychology.

Pretty soon, I found out that "military friendly" was just empty words to get me signed up. There was nothing special that veterans received and actually, I felt mistreated. The school made me feel irrational when I asked about my financial aid and other administrative questions. They were short and rude with me and the counselors and military representatives that were promised were nowhere to be found. Even the instructors were not responsive to the mental and physical injuries commonly faced by veterans.

But the biggest problem came in April 2020, when I was a few months away from graduating. I learned that my GI Bill benefits had expired in March but Ashford did not tell me. If it did, I could have taken steps to find other benefits or ways to cover my tuition. Instead, Ashford just put a balance on my account and expected me to pay out of pocket. I was shocked that the benefits were gone when I was promised they would cover everything. And I was furious that Ashford was not lifting a finger to help me find a way to finish my degree.

Then, when I reviewed my balance, I realized the problem was worse than I thought. I found that the school was no longer applying the full military discount that the recruiters had promised and I had received earlier in my time at the school. Also, I discovered I was being overcharged for courses and being charged a higher rate than I was told when I enrolled. This meant that my GI Bill benefits were exhausted long before they should have been and I owed a debt that never should have been there.

When I finished the program, Ashford told me that they would not give me my transcript and degree if I didn't pay the balance they claimed I owed. This was a major problem because I was hoping to continue my education at a different school or get a job, and I really needed my transcripts and degree to do that.

The bottom line is that Ashford made promises to get me to enroll at the school that did not turn out to be true. I would never have gone to Ashford if I had known that my GI Bill was not going to cover all my tuition, and that Ashford is unfriendly and unhelpful to military veterans, especially those experiencing injuries.

I hope that you write strong policies to protect veterans and stop the types of recruiting and financial aid problems that I experienced at Ashford.

Thank you.