

Testimony of Veteran Brendan Mullican
U.S. Education Department's Negotiated Regulatory Rulemaking Panel
March 2022

Good afternoon, my name is Brendan Mullican and I am a veteran of the U.S. Navy and served in the Iraq War. I decided to use my GI Bill benefits to earn a bachelor's degree from Sam Houston State, a school that is supposedly veteran-friendly. When I received my degree in 2013, it was a point of pride for me as I was the first person in my family to go to college.

I was fortunate to get a job right after college, but was told in order to move up in the company and receive a higher paycheck, I would need to go back to school and take some accounting classes. But because of Sam Houston State, I never got the chance to return.

During my final semester at Sam Houston State, I was told my account had a zero balance. A year later, I was sent a bill for nearly \$10K claiming my GI Bill benefits had run out and that I had to pay out of pocket. This baffled me, and I had emails from the school informing me that my balance was in fact zero as well as my own receipts keeping track of the tuition bills – I disputed the bill with my documentation but nothing came from it.

I have been trying to pursue both my state CPA exam and my masters degree for more than 4 years but am unable to because Sam Houston State refuses to release my

transcript because of the debt they say I owe to them.

At this point it is affecting both my career and my income because I can't pursue further education. I do not understand how they can come after me for this debt when I have documented proof that I do not owe them. Sam Houston went as far as to completely edit and change my invoice dates for tuition billing in order to try to collect the money.

Adding insult to injury, the school then sent the debt to a collection agency (without my knowledge) and I received a bill from the agency for \$12,689 in 2017. I cannot afford to pay this ridiculous amount.

I have contacted the VA, the veterans advocacy organization on campus and my congressman but have received no help or advocacy from anyone. It just seems unethical. I really regret going back to college now. I can't believe they would treat me that way. They say they do things to help vets, but it's just a lie.

I am hoping by sharing my story with you today, it will help prevent other veterans from going through what I did.

Thank you for your time.