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Old Forge, PA Veteran Testifies About Sham College - Calls for Reforms

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OLD FORGE, PA VETERAN AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS

Defrauded Veterans Speak Out About Sham Colleges & Need to Strengthen Accreditation & Licensing to Protect Students

WASHINGTON, DC—In the wake of being defrauded out of their GI Bill benefits, multiple veterans urged the federal government to better protect student veterans by creating a more rigorous authorization process for colleges and universities before they can take veterans' hard-earned GI Bill benefits as tuition payments.

"Veterans are understandably angry when they learn that a sham 'college' that cheated them out of their GI Bill was known to be a scam but was nevertheless approved for federal tuition," said **Carrie Wofford, President of Veterans Education Services**, a national nonprofit that fights for the GI Bill and the rights of veterans to utilize their education benefits. "The system is seriously broken. College accreditors and state authorization entities have [been exposed by news reporters](#) and law enforcement for approving sham 'colleges' with no teachers and no classrooms. We are pleased the Department is undertaking much-needed reform."

Telling their stories last week to the U.S. Department of Education during a public hearing on proposed rulemaking to revise college accreditation and state authorization, multiple veterans called for reforms to the process by which the U.S. Department of Education authorizes and oversees colleges and universities to receive federal student aid – authorization relied upon by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in approving GI Bill and veterans' education benefits. The veterans and their stories were brought to light by Veterans Education Services, continuing its long history of helping veterans tell their stories and advocating for changes to the system.

Army Veteran Deborah Butrim, Old Forge, PA

"They made it seem like it would be fast and that it would be covered in full by my GI Bill. ... [yet] I never received any substantive feedback that would improve my work, just elementary edits. It was often just as simple as adding commas and semicolons. I was never allowed to progress past this phase."

[Read her full testimony here](#)

Leading the fight before the Department of Education was **Veterans Education Success Vice President for Legal Affairs, Della Justice**, who testified that, "the current system of state-based authorization... is unduly influenced by the regulated entities, and is designed primarily for purposes of administrative and financial convenience of the schools rather than protection of students and the federal taxpayers... Accreditation as it exists today is clearly failing in its federal responsibility to serve as a quality assurance tool, as evident in sudden closures and collapses of accredited institutions, government allegations of institutional deceptive practices, and prevalence of intolerable outcomes—e.g. low graduation rates, low job placement rates, high debt to earnings rates, and low repayment rates."

This rulemaking opportunity comes on the heels of a bill filed by Congresswoman Delia Ramirez that would reinstate GI Bill benefits to veterans who were defrauded by a predatory school. Currently, when a veteran uses their GI Bill benefits at a college that defrauds them, they are not eligible to have those benefits restored, even when the government proves the fraud and recovers GI Bill funds from the school. This protection *does* exist for traditional students and their federal loans, however, under “borrower defense to repayment” authority at the U.S. Department of Education.

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Veterans Education Success is a nonpartisan organization whose mission is to advance higher education success for veterans, service members, and military families, and to protect the integrity and promise of the GI Bill and other federal education programs. The organization offers free help, advice, and college and career counseling to servicemembers, veterans, and their survivors and families using federal education benefits, and helps them participate in their democracy by engaging with policymakers. Veterans Education Success also provides non-partisan policy expertise to federal and state policymakers, and conducts non-partisan research on issues of concern to student veterans. Additional information is available at www.vetsedsuccess.org.