

Good afternoon. My name is Caitlin Kadell, and I'm a Marine Corps veteran. I would like to take a few minutes today to talk about my time at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. In 2014, I was a single mother with a desire to advance my career in a creative field. The Art Institute seemed like a good option. Since it was nearby and the classes were online, it accommodated my hectic schedule. The school was eager to sign me up; in retrospect, this was a red flag.

The education was not good. Whenever I struggled, the teachers were no help; instead, I had to turn to my fellow classmates. And the material we learned was limited—the school only taught us how to use Adobe, which was really expensive and harder to access once we left school. I wish we had learned more programs and developed a versatile skill set. But because I didn't have a lot to compare it to, I thought that this was all normal and just how school worked.

During a particularly difficult period in my life in late-2018 to early-2019, I had to pause my studies. Afterwards, I went to start classes again only to find the school had closed. I had been given no warning and was completely blindsided. For a brief time, their website showed my credits would transfer to a handful of other schools, but my local community college told me I would have to start from the beginning.

The whole experience was very frustrating, especially because I used up my GI Bill benefits and cannot get them back. I earned those benefits, and now I have nothing. With raising five kids and trying to pay the bills, school is just not an option for me anymore. But it is so hard to do anything without a degree. This kind of behavior needs to be stopped before students get hurt, because there just aren't remedies that can make up for everything we experienced.

I feel it was unfair that I was given no warning about the school's closure and was left with limited options afterward. Please consider rules that will protect people like me from abrupt school closings.

Thank you for your time.