

VES Tasha Media Advisory

Email Subject Line: Lima, OH, Vet Warns of Dangers to Student Vets by Dismantling Dept of Ed, Tues, May, U.S. Sen. Forum.

MEDIA ADVISORY

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AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS

Lima, OH, Army Veteran to Meet with Senators

Shares her Personal Story Being Scammed by a Predatory College, Warns that Dismantling Dept. of Ed + Firing Staff Who Oversee Student Vet Programs Could Harm All Vets Seeking Higher Ed

Sounds the Alarm: “Vets Will Have Nowhere to Turn”: Veterans at Risk from Continuing Abuses of Predatory Practices of Sham Schools That Prey on Student Veterans - Waste Their GI Bill Benefits + Saddle Them with Debt

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025

Streaming Live Link [Here](#) at 2:30p.m. EDT

OHIO- U.S. Army veteran and mother of five from Lima, Ohio, Tasha Berkhalter, is traveling to Washington to share with U.S. Senators on May 6 how she was misled by ITT Tech—a now-defunct, for-profit college—and left burdened with nearly **\$100,000 in student loan debt**.

- Her testimony comes as Senators consider **the consequences of dismantling key oversight functions within the U.S. Department of Education**. She will share her story at a forum with Senators (“Abandoning America’s Promise: The

Real Cost of Dismantling the Department of Education”) and will also meet with her Ohio representatives in Congress.

- *“I served my country, and all I wanted was a chance at a better future,” she says. “Instead, I was lied to, pushed into unaffordable loans, and left with a worthless degree.”*
- Despite promises from ITT Tech that her **GI Bill would cover all costs**, she was saddled with private and federal loans she never fully understood. Worse, employers dismissed her degree as invalid—shattering her dreams of working in criminal justice.
- In 2022, she was one of **over 200,000 students whose loans were discharged** by the Department of Education through the **Borrower Defense (BD) program**.

WHY IT MATTERS:

- **Her story mirrors that of thousands of veterans misled by predatory colleges.**
- The Department of Education is being dismantled, many of its staff laid off, and student protections like the one that helped Tasha are being rolled back. **Advocates warn that these cuts leave students and taxpayers even more vulnerable to predatory practices by sham schools**—institutions that waste veterans’ hard-earned GI Bill benefits, saddle them with unnecessary debt, and offer little to no path to career advancement.

Now, Berkhalter's raising the alarm:

- *“I’m heartbroken to hear that teams at the Department of Education who processed Borrower Defense applications, reviewed complaints, and held predatory schools accountable have been let go. Without them, student veterans like me will have nowhere to turn.”*

Available For Interviews-

- **Army veteran and mother of five, Tasha Berkhalter**, will share how she was cheated by a for-profit college—and left with nearly \$100K in Debt. Her loan was discharged by the Dept of Ed’s Borrower Defense (BD) Program, which forgives loans if a student was defrauded. This very team was recently fired as part of the Department of Education's dismantling. Tasha is speaking out because she is worried about other veterans who were scammed by a predatory school and will be left without any help.
- **Subject Matter Expert Barmak Nassirian**, Vice President for Higher Education Policy at [Veterans Education Success](#), can speak to the critical role of the U.S. Department of Education in protecting veterans and students from predatory

colleges. Nassirian can provide expert context on why strong federal oversight and accountability are urgently needed, including how institutions are accredited and approved to receive GI Bill benefits and federal student aid.

TESTIMONIES AND VIDEO ASSETS:

[Testimony: Tasha Berkhalter May 6, 2025](#)

Tasha spoke at a press conference in 2020. Her remarks can be found [here](#), and the video can be viewed [here](#) (Tasha begins speaking around the 6:40 mark). Tasha also shared [remarks](#) with the Department in October 2021 as it considered the right policy approaches to protect and support student veterans.

- [Video: Tasha Berkhalter's Story - Your Hometown Stations](#), FOX TV, June 10th, 2020
- [The Latest Coronavirus Relief Bill Includes A Provision That Will Help Veterans: NPR](#), March 12, 2021
- [Lima Veteran Goes to Washington](#) - The Lima News, February 26th, 2020
- [Trump's Dilemma: Reject DeVos Debt Forgiveness Rollback or Anger Veterans - The New York Times](#), May 20, 2020

Veterans Education Success is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to work on a bipartisan basis 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 postsecondary education programs. The organization offers free help, advice, and college and career counseling to veterans using the GI Bill 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 vetsedsuccess.org.

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