



VETERANS EDUCATION SUCCESS

Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee

HB 469: Institutions of Postsecondary Education – Disorderly School Closures

Position: Favorable

February 18, 2020

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Maryland General Assembly—House
Legislative Services Building
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 221401

Chair McIntosh and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ramond Curtis, and I am the State Policy Manager for Veterans Education Success, a nonprofit veterans service organization that advocates for public policy to ensure veterans' higher education success and to protect and defend the integrity and promise of the GI Bill. I am writing today in support of HB 469 which will define what an orderly school closure is; prohibit a closing school from not properly notifying students of its closure and failing to obtain transfer agreements; prevent an institution from collecting on student debt; and holds executive officers personally liable for disorderly closures.

Between 2015 and 2018, over 3,700 Maryland students, including many veterans, were affected by the catastrophic closures of the Everest Institute, Brightwood College, and ITT Technical Institute. Students enrolled in these schools faced sudden loss of educational opportunity and employment prospects, as well as loss of housing and financial security.

Latricia, a military veteran from Maryland, shared her unfortunate experience with Sanford Brown, a for-profit college that closed its doors weeks after she graduated, "I used the last of my post 9-11 GI bill and 3 years later, I still don't have a job. The school promised job placement assistance but closed down within weeks of my graduation. I felt so short changed, and now I have student loans that I can't afford to pay back." HB 469 will take steps to protect students from these situations in the future.

HB 469 defines a disorderly closure as one that does not offer students an adequate and equally affordable credit-transfer option and leaves students unable to complete their course of study. In these cases, the bill protects students from unpaid debts owed to the school, refunds tuition paid, and holds school owners liable. Importantly, the bill ensures that students have access to their academic records in the event of a closure.

Maryland has an important opportunity to protect students from sudden and disorderly closures, and HB 469 takes an essential step in doing so. I urge the committee to move favorably on the bill.

Sincerely,
Ramond Curtis