

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH  
*Legislative District 30*  
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

*Senate Chair*

Joint Committee on Administrative,  
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and  
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 4, 2020

**Testimony in Favor of SB0318**

**Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemptions for Spouses and Dependents of Honorably Discharged Veterans**

Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 318. This bill would allow for dependents and spouses who are using Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits to receive the in-state tuition rate at public universities within Maryland and retain the same rate even once their GI Bill benefits have been exhausted.

According to the federal Veterans, Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, veterans using GI Bill benefits are able to receive the in-state rate at all public institutions throughout the United States. The federal law also expanded this to dependents and spouses with transferred GI Bill benefits, but only if they enrolled at a public institution within three years of the veterans' discharge date. SB 318 merely lifts the three year restriction.

More than twenty states, including Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Illinois, and Ohio have adopted their own respective policies in order to remain compliant with this federal law. A majority have removed the three year window restriction in order to expand benefits for students and draw even more students to their universities with this inclusive incentive. At Ohio State University, with an undergraduate population of around 50,000 students, only 120 students were affected by this change. This is approximately 0.03% of the student body, illustrating the minimal number of students who are affected by the three year limitation and paying a lesser rate.

This bill would allow for only those who are actively using a transferred Post 9/11 GI Bill benefit from the Veterans Affairs department at their university to receive the in-state tuition rate, regardless of when the veteran retired or was discharged. Additionally, these students would be allowed to retain this in-state tuition rate, even once their GI Bill Benefits have been exhausted, as long as they remain continuously enrolled at the university.

As you can see in the Fiscal Note, this Bill is estimated to have minimal fiscal impact. We are working with the Maryland Association of Community Colleges on an amendment to ensure that our critical community colleges do not see a loss in revenue due to expanding benefits to our veterans and their families.

Once again, I ask for your support on Senate Bill 213 and your commitment to our veterans and veteran families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah Elfreth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sarah Elfreth