

January 2020

Testimony in Support of SB0318

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

I'd like to thank Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for this opportunity to speak about Senate Bill 318 and why it is imperative for higher education institutions in Maryland.

My name is Lily-Max Cooke and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland, but more importantly I am the daughter of a veteran. I am currently receiving Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits, which were transferred to me by my father. When I was a senior in high school, and deciding where I wanted to go to college, I quickly discovered that due to my GI Bill benefits, I was eligible for in-state tuition at a variety of state schools. However this is not the case within the state of Maryland.

The current policy in Maryland, which was adopted in accordance with the federal Veteran's Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 ('Choice Act'), unintentionally creates an unjust result for students who utilize transferred Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Specifically, this bill would remove the 3 year enrollment requirement. According to the current policy, a dependent or spouse using transferred GI Bill benefits has to enroll at a public institution within three years of the veteran's retirement date - in order to be eligible for the in state tuition rate. At the time of my father's retirement I was only 13. Removing this requirement and allowing for students to retain the in-state rate even once their benefits have been fully exhausted exemplifies the support Maryland has for out-of-state military families to pursue their academic careers without the worries of financial limitations.

Maryland, as a military friendly state, should recognize the value of supporting our veterans and their family members in their endeavors to pursue higher education. While on the surface it seems as though this expansion would allow a large amount of students to receive in-state tuition, in reality this is not the case. There are two pieces of criteria a student must have in order to be eligible. They must be an out-of-state student with the transferred GI Bill benefits (this does not include servicemembers, only dependents and spouses), **and** they must be actively using those benefits at the university - meaning they are receiving monthly payments from the VA. Any student who has already exhausted their GI Bill would not be eligible for the in-state rate. Throughout my research I have found over 20 states have implemented this policy.

Specifically, at Ohio State University only 120 students out of 45,946 students were affected. 0.003% of their undergraduate population at a Big 10 university.¹

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 318. This bill would truly bring Maryland up to speed with the other states that have been proactive thus far, and exemplifies the devotion we have towards our veterans and their families. Thank you.

¹ Conversation with Michael Forrest, Program Director at OSU Veteran's Affairs Office