

SB 7 Testimony

Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee. My name is Giuseppe Mellinger. I serve as Senator Simonaire's intern, am a current Army Cadet, and the son of an Iraq War veteran. I respectfully ask for your support of SB 7.

Why SB 7 Matters

- The Douglas J. J. Peters Scholarship provides essential support that the GI Bill does not always cover, including housing gaps, mandatory fees, part time enrollment, and assistance when federal benefits expire.
- For veterans who **separated before January 1, 2013**, the Post 9/11 GI Bill expires after fifteen years. **This is exactly what my family experienced.** My dad is a combat veteran who served in Iraq in **2003**, but his GI Bill **expired** before my sister or I were ever old enough to receive any benefits from it.
- The Peters Scholarship is scheduled to end in **2030**. Without action, many veterans and dependents who **earned** this benefit through service in Iraq or Afghanistan will **never** have the opportunity to use it.

Why an Extension Is Necessary

- **Without SB 7, veterans lose access** simply because the program sunsets, not because they became **ineligible**.
- The scholarship was created to honor service in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. Ending it early breaks that commitment for those who still rely on it.
- **SB 7 removes the 2030 termination date**, allowing the program to continue until the General Assembly determines it no longer serves its purpose.

One Real World Scenario

- A servicemember deploys to Afghanistan at age twenty and continues serving for two decades, including after the 2021 withdrawal.
- They retire in 2041 and finally have the time and stability to begin college in 2042.
- **Under current law, the Peters Scholarship ends in 2030. This veteran would be ineligible despite meeting every requirement.**
- The same issue affects dependents.
- A child born in 2035 would not reach college age until 2053.
- Even though the parent earned the benefit, the dependent would receive nothing because the program ended before they were old enough to use it.
- **Without SB 7**, both the veteran and their dependent lose access to a benefit they earned through service.

- **SB 7 prevents** this outcome by removing the sunset and ensuring the scholarship remains available when veterans and their families actually need it.

Closing

SB 7 protects veterans from losing a benefit they have already earned. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 7. Thank you for your consideration.