

Statement of  
**Congressman Jody Hice**  
Thursday, June 23, 2016, at 10:30 a.m.  
334 Cannon House Office Building  
Before the House Veterans Affairs Committee  
*Legislative Hearing on:*  
H.R. 5047, “*Protecting Veterans’ Educational Choice Act of 2016.*”

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I would like to thank Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brown for holding this hearing today and inviting me to testify on behalf of my bill, H.R. 5047, the “*Protecting Veterans Educational Choice Act of 2016.*”

Mr. Chairman, there are nearly one million student veterans using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to pursue their educations, and that number is only expected to grow over the next several years. Despite this benefit – which is the most generous educational benefit our nation has ever offered – many veterans still end up having to take out student loans to cover the full cost of their education.

In many cases, this is due to situations where veterans don’t realize – or have been deliberately misled by college recruiters – that credits earned at one institution will not transfer to another school until they are already in the process of transferring to a new school after they have already expended a significant portion of their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

The ability to transfer credits from one institution to another is governed by sets of credit transfer agreements between schools known as articulation agreements. If two institutions do not have an articulation agreement in place, there is no guarantee that a school will accept any of the credits earned at the other institution.

To prevent situations where veterans – many of whom are first-generation college students – are surprised by this aspect of higher education, I introduced H.R. 5047, the “*Protecting Veterans’ Educational Choice Act of 2016*.” My legislation would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to include information about articulation agreements, as well as information about educational counseling services provided by the VA, to every veteran actively seeking to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

In addition, H.R. 5047 would require VA counselors who provide educational or vocational counseling to inform veterans about the various agreements that exist between schools that govern the transfer of credits. While schools are required by the Higher Education Act to provide on their websites – in an easily accessible manner – the policies of the institution related to transfer of credit from other institutions, these policies are not necessarily well-advertised. I am happy to work with the Committee to clarify the language so that providing veterans

with this information will not be administratively burdensome for the VA counselors.

My overall goal with this legislation is to ensure that no veteran feels as though he or she has misused their benefits because of a lack of information at the start of the process. Ultimately, decisions regarding how and where to use these benefits are rightfully left to those who served our country. However, it is incumbent upon Congress to ensure that our veterans are as informed as possible about the benefits and opportunities that they have earned. I strongly believe that this legislation will go a long ways to help accomplish this.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you and all of my colleagues on the Committee on ways to improve this bipartisan bill and move it towards a mark-up.

I yield back.