

Testimony of U.S. Representative Jennifer McClellan (VA-04)

For the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs

Hearing Entitled “119th Congress Member Day Hearing”

December 4, 2025

Hello and thank you, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Committee for holding this Member Day hearing today. I am here to discuss one of my top priorities this Congress: to improve the Department of Veterans Affairs Work Study Program. My bill, H.R.5965, the Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act, aims to do just that.

Our veterans give so much to our communities, and it's imperative that we do everything in our power to support the needs of veterans as they transition out of active-duty service back to civilian life. This includes efforts to modernize, improve, and expand the availability of programs that train and educate our veterans for civilian jobs following their service.

One such program that serves veterans as they transition into civilian life is the VA work-study program which allows veterans to receive a part-time, paying job on campus or at another VA-approved employer while enrolled as a student in a 2-year or 4-year higher education institution, vocational, or professional program. Currently, however, only students who are enrolled as at least a three-quarter-time student are allowed to participate in the VA work-study program. This requirement excludes half-time students, ignoring the fact that student veterans are older than traditional students, often have children and other family members to care for, have unique mental health needs, and financial considerations that are distinct from traditional students. As a

result, this requirement does not take into consideration the needs of students for whom half-time enrollment is a necessity.

I introduced the Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act to provide student veterans with a flexible work-study program that considers their unique needs and circumstances. This legislation, previously led by former Representative Matt Cartwright, would update the VA Work Study Program to improve accessibility for student veterans. Specifically, this bill would:

- Create a 5-year Pilot Program to expand VA work-study eligibility to student veterans who are enrolled half-time.
- Require the VA to report data on the VA Work-Study Program to Congress, including the number of participating veterans; the percentage of student veterans who obtain a four-year degree; and how many student veterans obtain full-time work with the VA.

In 2022, this bill passed out of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee via voice vote and also passed the House under suspension. Unfortunately, it did not advance in the Senate. I urge the members of this committee to once again advance this legislation so we can continue improving the resources available to veterans as they transition back into civilian life.

Thank you