

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

of

Dr. Cynthia Azari's Testimony

before the

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs – Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

concerning

“Implementation of Services and Programs for Veterans Seeking Attending Public Colleges”

Riverside City College president and interim chancellor designee of Riverside Community College District in Southern California is scheduled to present testimony before the subcommittee on June 20, 2013. Dr. Azari's testimony focuses on how one public community college district provides services and programs to student veterans, as well as the affect of H.R. 4057 and Executive Order 13607 on the institution's ability to provide such services.

As one of California's largest community college districts responsible for a service area of 450 sq. miles and 1.4 million people, RCCD operates three fully accredited colleges with combined enrollments of 33,000 a semester—approximately 1,200 of whom are veterans. Two major military facilities are located in that service area—March Air Reserve Base and a Naval Surface Warfare Center—along with the Riverside National Cemetery. The District serves a diverse student population—many of whom are first-time college students—that mirrors the larger community. The region's college-going rate and socio-economic levels are lower than the state averages, while the unemployment rate exceeds state and national averages.

RCCD's three colleges have put several programs in place to better serve veterans and have attracted six-figure private donations and federal grants to directly serve veterans. This external funding is used to fund and expanded veterans' programs, services, and scholarships. As a result, RCCD student veterans benefit from veteran-specific orientation, counseling, education planning, offices and centers, and other support activities.

In 2012, more than 170 student veterans graduated with degrees and/or certificates. Over 10% of these veterans earned multiple degrees or certificates—most oriented toward high-demand jobs in the workplace. Based, in part, upon its experiences in serving student veterans, the District proposes five primary suggestions for improving the efficacy of H.R. 4057 and Executive Order 13607, which it believes will lead to greater access, retention and success for student veterans. These include the passage of H.R. 331, authored by the Subcommittee Ranking Member Mark Takano and Congressman Ken Calvert.

Riverside City College, Moreno Valley College, Norco College and the District look forward to continuing to work with elected officials and government agencies to improve and implement services and programs for veterans.