



March 20, 2018

Chairman Jodey Arrington  
Ranking Member Beto O'Rourke  
Members of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity  
House Committee on Veterans Affairs  
335 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee:

On behalf of Student Veterans of America (SVA), a coalition of student veteran organizations on more than 1,500 college and university campuses across the country and representing more than 700,000 student veterans in higher education, I am writing to express our support of HR 4830, the *"Servicemembers Improved Transition through Reforms for Ensuring Progress Act"* or the *"SIT-REP Act."*

This legislation is important for student veterans. This bill proposes requiring schools that accept VA education dollars to adopt veteran-friendly policies that prevent discriminating student veterans and their families due to payment issues from VA. The bill would disapprove any school that fails to adopt policies that (1) permit covered individuals to attend institution after providing a certificate of eligibility for entitlement to education benefits under Chapters 30, 31, 33, or 35 until institution receives payment for course or 90 days after certificate of eligibility provided; and (2) prohibit institutions from imposing any penalty, including late fees, denial of access to classes, facilities, etc., or requirement that the individual borrow additional funds due to delayed benefit disbursement.

Schools may view payments from GI Bill students as delayed, and thereby require students to take out unnecessary loans or assess unfair late fees, while the timing of the payments is under no control of the student. In the case of Post-9/11 GI Bill, for example, the VA requires the SCO to certify the student enrollment before VA authorizes payment for each of those students. This requirement prevents overpayments and otherwise potentially harmful "clawbacks" from students. Understanding that timely payments to schools is important, schools must recognize that penalizing students for using their earned GI Bill benefits due to the perceived delays of administrative burden is wholly inappropriate.

In some cases, families of the fallen have been unfairly targeted with late fees due to the VA's delayed or late payments at no fault of the student.<sup>21</sup> While some schools have received billions of dollars of Post-9/11 GI Bill dollars, we call on higher education as an industry to be flexible with service-affiliated students using VA education benefits, as it is greatly in their interest to find ways to support this important population of nontraditional students. Schools that already provide this level of flexibility to these students should have no additional burden in compliance with these rules, and Student Veterans of America supports the passage of this bill.

Please contact me at [jared.lyon@studentveterans.org](mailto:jared.lyon@studentveterans.org) or 202-223-4710 with any questions about this issue, or the great work of our student veterans across the country.

Sincerely,

Jared Lyon