

Statement for the Record – Rep. Lauren Underwood

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Economic Opportunity Subcommittee Legislative Hearing

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am honored to join today's Economic Opportunity subcommittee legislative hearing, which includes a new bill that I will soon be introducing, the *Protections for Student Veterans Act*.

For more than 75 years, the VA's education benefits have helped veterans pay college tuition, find the right school or training program, and access career counseling.¹ Thanks to these important benefits, veterans have been able to transition from military service to successful careers in a range of industries.

Yet for too many student veterans, a period of active service or inactive-duty training could mean grade reductions, failing grades, and even financial penalties.

It is unacceptable for a veteran to be punished for their ongoing service to our country. I'm thankful that my home state of Illinois has taken action to right this wrong, and I'm proud to be introducing the *Protections for Student Veterans Act* to build on Illinois' example and ensure that veterans in every state can continue their education without penalty if they are called to serve.

The bill that I will soon be introducing will implement several commonsense protections for student veterans, including a prohibition on assigning failing grades or other punishments for service members who receive orders to begin active service or training. My bill will also

¹ <https://www.va.gov/education/>

ensure that veterans who are called to service are refunded for tuition and fees for incomplete academic terms and have opportunities to resume their studies when their service is complete.

These are basic protections that make good on our promises to veterans and honor the ongoing sacrifices made by our service members.

I look forward to working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle in this Committee to get this legislation passed and signed into law. Our veterans deserve nothing less.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.