



October 12, 2017

The Honorable Jodey Arrington
Chairman
House VA Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
United States House of Representatives
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Beto O'Rourke
Ranking Member
House VA Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
United States House of Representatives
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Arrington and Ranking Member O'Rourke,

VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association, would like to express strong opposition to the "Draft Bill" being considered in the House VA Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. This bill is designed to diminish the current approved and valuable training and education track for veterans.

This legislation would "liquidate" the GI bill and push veterans to end their benefit in 18 months, thus discouraging selection of aviation education programs at approved public universities. The principal root provision puts a cap in place well below the cost of delivery that eliminates the opportunities completely in 2018, or creates the gambling option of compacting the benefit and taking "accelerated payments". There are some that believe veterans benefits should only be used for liberal arts degrees and that Congress in choosing to expand the benefits to cover high value commercial aviation training is too generous. We strongly disagree.

If there are problems with the implementation of education programs we stand ready to work for solutions to those issues. However, we will not support direct cuts to veterans' benefits because veterans are not worthy of the value associated with a program cost relating to aviation training. Further, numerous reports and events in the world have shown the need-- and in other cases dearth-- of qualified candidates to fill aviation jobs. We should be enhancing career options for disabled and able-bodied veterans alike. We look forward to working with your Committee and strongly oppose this bill. Please feel free to reach out with any questions to our Director of Veterans Policy, Christopher Neiweem at cneiweem@vetsfirst.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ross Meglathery".

Ross Meglathery, MPA
Vice-President, VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association