

# Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5544

AN ACT CONCERNING FEE WAIVERS FOR VETERANS ATTENDING PUBLIC

**Title:** INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

**Vote Date:** 3/22/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/4/2021

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Representative Napoli, 73<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District

### REASONS FOR BILL:

College fees are so high they can be an impediment for some of our Veterans who want to attend college. This bill will help them by giving veterans who served in a time of war student fee waivers at public higher education institutions

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Sean Bradbury, Senior Director of Government Relations and External Affairs Connecticut State Colleges & Universities](#) submitted written testimony. Mr. Bradbury shared that “In FY2020 CSCU awarded over 1,300 tuition waivers to student veterans across the system (358 at the CSUs and 946 at the community colleges), which amounted to over \$1.7 million in waived tuition costs not covered by federal aid or employer reimbursement.” He went on to say that CSCU encourages the Legislature to “appropriate the funding for this fee waiver rather than place the burden to pay for it on our students and their families who will not qualify for these waivers especially during a time like this when many of our students and their families have faced pandemic related health issues, job losses, and unprecedented economic insecurity and uncertainty.”

The request for clarification is for “a clearer definition of which fees would be covered by this waiver. Expanding coverage to housing and meal plan fees could substantially expand the cost of this waiver.”

[Alyssa Kelleher, Director of the Office of Veterans Affairs and Military Programs, University of Connecticut](#) submitted written testimony expressing her support and also her concerns about

the bill. She stated “The intent of this legislation is laudable, decreasing the financial burden placed on our veteran students to pursue higher education. However, it must be kept in mind that as the Statute is currently written, The University of Connecticut is not reimbursed for Veteran or National Guard waivers.”

Ms. Kelleher had the following questions:

- Given the wide variety of types of fees amongst our campuses, and amongst the different universities and colleges, some additional clarification on which fees should be waived would be warranted.

- Would individual student specific fees such as parking and health services be covered?
- Would the fee waiver include all fees or just general expense fees?
- Would the fee waiver include the cost of room and board?

-Should there be a requirement for the veteran student to pay back fees waived by the University if the student does not complete the semester or withdraws? This is a practice used by several states including Florida.

- Would this waiver apply only to students using the State Waiver, or also to students using the National Guard Waiver?

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Joseph P. Nolan, Gold Star father and Marine Corps Veteran of the Vietnam War](#) submitted written testimony in support of this bill stating that “all CT war veterans should be eligible for fee waivers regardless of the conflict or hostile action they participated in.” He continued that it “could potentially increase the number of veterans attending state colleges and boost dwindling college enrollments.”

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None stated.

**Reported by: Jeanie Phillips, Clerk**

**Date: March 24, 2021**