

March 10, 2020

The Honorable Conor Lamb
U.S. House of Representatives
1224 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
U.S. House of Representatives
1772 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Lamb and Congressman Fitzpatrick:

On behalf of our nearly 1,700 members, representing two- and four-year, public and private colleges and universities and related higher education associations, I write in strong support of your legislation, the Federally Requiring Earned Education-debt Discharges for Vets Act, or “FREED Vets” Act (H.R. 3598). We understand this legislation is on the House suspension calendar and may be taken up this week.

H.R. 3598 would clarify existing law in the Higher Education Act (HEA) to ensure that veterans with a total and permanent disability (TPD) rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) would have their federal student loans discharged automatically by the Department of Education (ED)—with no application from the veteran required. Using its administrative authority, ED recently has taken steps to streamline the process for receiving a TPD loan discharge. However, there have been questions about ED’s authority to take these steps under the HEA and whether veterans are receiving debt relief in a timely and seamless way. Given the importance of ensuring loan relief for severely disabled veterans, we believe it is critical to have these changes codified in federal statute.

H.R. 3598 makes clear Congress’ intent to have ED automatically cancel student loan debt for veterans with a TPD rating and also creates an opt-out provision for any veteran who does not want his or her loan automatically forgiven. The bill ensures that minor discrepancies between the name of a veteran identified by VA as receiving a TPD rating and the name of the student loan borrower in ED’s database, such as a name discrepancy post-marriage or resulting from a typo, will not prevent ED from cancelling the student loan debt.

Thank you again for your bipartisan efforts to ensure that veterans who have become severely disabled in service to our country receive the student loan relief to which they are entitled under the law. We look forward to the legislation swiftly passing both chambers and being signed into law.

Sincerely,



Terry Hartle
Senior Vice President, Government and Public Affairs