

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

HEARING ON EXAMINING MID-SEMESTER SCHOOL CLOSURES
IMPACT ON STUDENT VETERANS

May 15, 2019

TESTIMONY OF ANDI LITI

Hello, my name is Andi Liti, I am a student veteran, and I would like to thank the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity for extending me this opportunity to share my experience. I hope my testimony today will be helpful in illuminating the issues student veterans face when colleges close in the middle of the semester.

I am an Albanian immigrant who came to the United States in 1999 under the visa lottery program. I received my undergraduate degree in Sociology from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania in 2007 before entering the Marine Corps. I was enlisted from 2008-2017 and I served as a cryptologic linguist, signals intelligence operator, and language instructor.

After leaving the Marine Corps, I decided to enroll at Argosy University in their Master's program of Clinical Psychology at the Arlington, Virginia campus, with the goal of continuing on and obtaining my Doctorate. I chose this degree because of my passion to learn about best practices in mental health and to help others lead better lives. Thanks to the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Yellow Ribbon Program, I was able to attend school without accruing any additional debt, which I'm extremely grateful for.

In mid-January, we were instructed by Argosy that our school had entered into a receivership due to their financial problems. Our student body was not aware of these issues,

even though Argosy was under financial monitoring from the Department of Education since 2017. Throughout the process, there was a lack of clear communication to students regarding what was happening, and if or when Argosy was going to close. Two months after our initial warning, Argosy abruptly closed down all of its campuses and left thousands of students stranded and unsure about their future. At this juncture, I was 3 months away from receiving my Master's degree, while also working as an extern for the PWC Community Services Board, which provides mental health services for those in need. After the closure, I was not allowed to continue my externship, which is a disservice to my personal clients and an unnecessary disruption of workflow for the community center. In the following weeks, I contemplated changing careers, finding new employment, and even moving to another state for better opportunities.

Fortunately, due to a teach-out agreement, I am now enrolled at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology – DC Campus. I applied for and received the GI Bill restoration for the semester during which Argosy shut down, which thankfully, allowed me to cover this summer session's expenses. However, it will now take me a year and a half to complete my Master's degree and six years instead of five to complete my Doctorate. This is due to the differences in requirements and length of training. And due to this change, I will have to take out over \$30,000 in federal loans, which would not have been required with Argosy.

I hope this committee will look at ways to increase protections that ensure student veterans are not hurt when colleges close abruptly. I believe that the Department of Education should be more cognizant of practices used by for-profit schools and must hold them accountable before student lives are deeply impacted. In addition, there have been

inconsistencies with the restoration of GI Bill benefits, where some students have been denied without clear cause; this must be addressed. The restoration of the entire enrollment period as granted in “special application” cases, would be beneficial to all student veterans that cannot find a new school or are unable to transfer all credits. An increase of Yellow Ribbon allocations to schools involved in teach-out agreements may also be helpful. Lastly, the instructions given by the GI Bill representatives and help lines were often unclear, and some veterans have expressed their concerns about the level of professionalism or their ability to assist us in these special cases.

The GI Bill is an extraordinary benefit granted to those that have served, and I am incredibly appreciative to receive it. That being said, situations such as this lead student veterans and their families to experience hardships and result in uncertainties about their future. I am thankful for the opportunity to share my story with this committee and appreciate your commitment to America’s veterans. Thank you very much for your time.