

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 15, 2019

Chairman Adam Smith  
House Committee on Armed Services  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Jim Inhofe  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
228 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Mac Thornberry  
House Committee on Armed Services  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Jack Reed  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
228 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Smith, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Thornberry, and Ranking Member Reed,

We write to offer our strong support for the inclusion of Section 574 of H.R. 2500 in the final, conferenced Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).


As you are aware, Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction 1341.13 which governs the Post-9/11-GI Bill was updated in July 2018 with significant changes to eligibility standards. Chief among these changes was a new restriction making servicemembers with more than sixteen years of service ineligible from transferring education benefits to their spouses and children.


We strongly disagree with this change in policy. It unfairly targets servicemembers, and disadvantages servicemembers who marry, remarry, or have children later in life—significant life events which might encourage a servicemember to leave the military. It remains critically important to attract and retain the best-qualified individuals for military service and we believe it sends exactly the wrong message to some of our most seasoned servicemembers to make them ineligible for incentives to continue their service to our nation.

In response to this new policy, H.R. 2500 includes Section 574 which was unanimously adopted by the House Armed Services Committee and would restrict the Secretary of Defense from prescribing regulations on Post-9/11 GI Bill transferability eligibility based on a maximum number of service years, effectively blocking the implementation of restrictions like those announced in June 2018. Following Section 574's inclusion in H.R. 2500 and a follow-on letter from 29 members of the House Armed Services Committee, DOD agreed to delay implementation of the new eligibility restriction on servicemembers with more than sixteen years of service until January 12, 2020. The intent of this delay was to give Congress the opportunity to negotiate a final NDAA and to spare servicemembers the confusion of a potential reversal due to congressional action.


We believe it is time to settle this issue permanently and urge you to include Section 574 in the final, conferenced FY 2020 NDAA. We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you as we consider policies to attract and retain our country's best and the brightest to serve in the armed forces.

Sincerely,


  
JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress

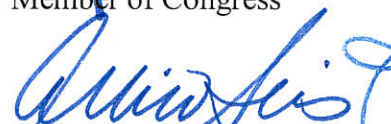
  
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Member of Congress

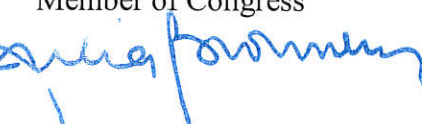
  
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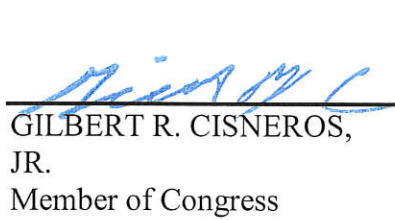


  
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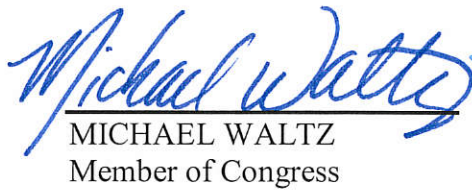
  
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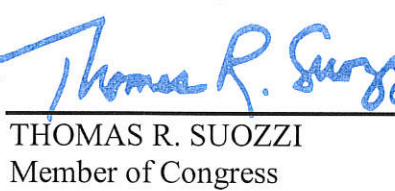
  
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