

# DAVE MURPHY

State Representative • 56th Assembly District

Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs

Public Hearing, February 7, 2018

Assembly Bill 853

Testimony of State Representative Dave Murphy

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 853.

Earlier this session, UW–Madison presented me with a problem their student-veterans were having.

After receiving their undergraduate degree and getting accepted into graduate school, these students were discovering that they were no longer eligible for in-state tuition and would have to pay the increased non-resident rate.

Years ago, many states began offering veterans, and certain family members, in-state tuition. Although Wisconsin was one of these states, we accomplished it through university policy instead of law.

This created an unfortunate gap when it came to veterans who go on to pursue a graduate degree.

Three categories of individuals are eligible for this benefit and would continue to be eligible into graduate school under our bill:

1. Any veteran who enrolls in UW System within three years of discharge from a period of active duty service of 90 days or more.
2. A spouse or child of the above who has had their federal benefits transferred to them.
3. A spouse or child of a U.S. armed forces service member who died in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001.

Our bill fixes this gap in veteran benefits by designating those students who are recipients of federal veteran benefits as “covered individuals,” allowing them to continue to pay in-state tuition if they want to pursue a graduate education without needing to take a one-year break from school to establish state residency.

Thank you.

**Senate Committee on Transportation & Veterans Affairs – Assembly Bill 853 (SUPPORT)**

**Testimony provided by**

**Lily Hansen, Student**

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**February 7, 2018**

Chairman Skowronski & Members of the Assembly Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs,

Good afternoon, my name is Lily Hansen. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Assembly Bill 853. Before I discuss the logistics of the bill, I would like to let you into my life so that you all understand where I am coming from.

*I am a current senior at the University of Wisconsin Madison and am both finishing up my last year and am in the process of applying to graduate school to become a doctor of audiology. I grew up in California and was recruited to UW Madison for rowing and am currently supported by an athletic scholarship and the Fry scholarship. (Children and surviving spouses of an active duty member of the Armed Forces who died in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001 are eligible for this benefit.)*

*The military has always been a part of my life as my birth-mother was enlisted right out of high school. In 2011, she and her unit were meeting at an IHOP in order to plan a revolutionary 9/11 ceremony for those they personally knew who were killed in the aftermath. On that day, a gunman came into the IHOP and shot everyone at the table. While having a bullet in her gut, she managed to lead everyone to safety which in turn took her life at the young age of 32.*

*Since then I became passionate about making yellow ribbons on Veterans Day to help students remember the importance of our vets. I carried this high school tradition into college and have am happy to share that I was able to hand out over 4,000 ribbons to students in my time at UW. Additionally, every year on September 11<sup>th</sup> I volunteer my time to read off the names of fallen soldiers from the twin towers attack and on Memorial Day I make sure to make its symbolic origins known on social media.*

*Being supported by the Fry Scholarship has opened doors that I didn't know existed. That same year, Obama commented "you pick the school, and we'll help pick up the bill". This enactment changed the lives of many students across the nation and made undergraduate school affordable. As I am getting ready to leave Wisconsin and head off to graduate school, I am terrified of the future outstanding costs as an out of state student. This bill would allow me to refrain from maintaining a job while being a full time student and clinical assistant. The passing of this bill could further enable me to reach my dreams of becoming a doctor.*

I'd also like to make sure that the logistics of residency are covered in my testimony. It is important to note that in order to be eligible residency purposes for financial assistance, veterans, like all other students must meet the statutory requirement of living in Wisconsin for at least 12 months for reasons other than obtaining an education. Many other states and schools used the Veterans Choice Act (the new bill -- the Veterans Choice Improvement Act -- addressed a major complaint of veterans service organizations by directing the VA to cover co-pays and deductibles directly for private care rather than reimbursing veterans for paying up front) as a way to grant in-state residency for their students. Wisconsin chose to grant undergraduate in-state tuition to veterans using Board of Regents policy.

This has created a "donut hole" for veterans that come to Wisconsin for school, have been paying an in-state tuition rate for their undergraduate education, but would need to begin paying out-of-state tuition if they were to seek graduate education when their federal benefits run out.

Assembly Bill 853 would fix this problem by designating that those students who are recipients of federal veterans benefits would be considered "covered individuals" and would continue to pay in-state tuition if they wanted to pursue a graduate education without needing to take a one-year break from school to establish residency.

This is another way that we can help veterans and their families by closing a loophole that prevents them from paying the in-state tuition rate, while creating consistency in making a *change that most other states have already made.*

I would like to thank Representative Murphy and Senator Petrowski for introducing this legislation to help support student-veterans and military dependents in the state of Wisconsin. I thank the committee for taking the time to consider this important bill and I would be happy to take questions at this time.

**Assembly Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs – Assembly Bill 853 (SUPPORT)**

**Testimony provided by**

**John Bechtol & Joe Rasmussen, Veterans Services & Military Assistance Center**

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**February 7, 2018**

Chairman Skowronski and Members of the Assembly Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Assembly Bill 853. We are John Bechtol and Joe Rasmussen from the Veterans Services & Military Assistance Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We help veterans, service members and military dependents navigate federal and state educational benefits at UW-Madison.

John Bechtol has been an Assistant Dean of Students, Division of Student Life, since 2008. Prior to that he served on active duty in the U.S. Army for 21 years.

Joe Rasmussen has been the Certifying Official, Office of the Registrar, since 2012. Prior to that he earned his undergraduate degree at UW-Whitewater and graduate degree at UW-Madison, after serving four years active duty in the USMC.

In order to be eligible for designation as a resident for tuition purposes, veterans, like all other students must meet the statutory requirement of living in Wisconsin for at least 12 months for reasons other than obtaining an education. Many other states and schools used the Veterans Choice Act as a vehicle to grant in-state residency for their students. Wisconsin chose to grant the equivalent of in-state tuition to veterans using Board of Regents policy, referred to as the "702-tuition rate."

This policy has created a "gap" for veterans or dependents that come to Wisconsin for school and want to immediately continue onto graduate school. They are granted the 702-tuition rate for their undergraduate education, but upon receipt of their degree, would have to pay out-of-state tuition if they were to immediately continue onto a graduate program.

Assembly Bill 853 would fix this problem by designating that those students who are recipients of federal veterans benefits would be considered "covered individuals" and would continue to pay in-state tuition if they wanted to pursue a graduate education without needing to take a one-year break from school to establish residency. This change would add Wisconsin to a long list of other states that have already made the change.

We would like to thank Representative Murphy and Senator Petrowski for introducing this legislation to help support student-veterans in the state of Wisconsin. We thank the committee for taking the time to consider this important bill and we would be happy to take questions at this time.