

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5417 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT ALLOWING CHILDREN OF VETERANS TO USE SUCH VETERAN'S UNUSED TUITION WAIVERS AND REQUIRING STATE FUNDING FOR

Title: TUITION WAIVERS.

Vote Date: 3/12/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/5/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Bill Buckbee, 67th Dist.

Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for HB-5417 is to allow children of veterans to utilize their unused tuition waivers in their college careers. As our state sees a drop-off in enrollment in higher education, implementing stratagems by which enrollment can increase can address these problems and, according to the proponents of this bill, by allowing unused military service waivers to be used by children of veterans, more students who may not ordinarily have entered higher education in Connecticut will be able to do so.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute language for HB-5417 dictates that only one student in a family of veterans may use the waiver who currently resides in the State of Connecticut and has not received any fee waiver pursuant to Sections 10a-99 and/or 10a-105 as amended in this bill.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, Interim Chancellor, O. John Maduko: Interim Chancellor Maduko offers his tacit support for this legislation, saying that it is in CSCU's best interest to keep affordability high for all students in Connecticut. But, the Interim Chancellor urges caution, claiming that by relying on fee waivers, institutions are lacking funds necessary to operate. Maduko appreciates the language in this bill stating the need to reimburse public institutions with state funds but advises establishing an ongoing line-item appropriation to, "[R]eimburse tuition and fee waivers, including the expansions proposed

under this legislation, would allow CSCU institutions to sustain these critical access programs while redirecting limited operating resources toward addressing urgent fiscal and student support needs."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut General Assembly, State Representative, Bill Buckbee: Representative Buckbee supports this legislation claiming that children of veterans face many hardships given their parent's movements and relocations, causing disruption that can be solved by extending tuition waivers that the veteran in question has not used. This would in effect, according to Buckbee, be a net positive on the state, using unused waivers to increase access to education that many children of veterans cannot achieve without such a program.

Warren Hengel: Supports this legislation claiming that it would positively impact many people in the state whose parents are veterans and have yet to use their tuition waivers. Hengel states that with these waivers in place, students could see a 50% cut in their overall college cost and relieve their parents of the stress and financial strain paying for that tuition. This money saved would, according to Hengel, be likely reinvested into the community in the form of purchase of goods and services, paying of bills, taxes, and other investments which benefit the economy.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

University of Connecticut, Director of the Office of Veterans and Military Programs, Alyssa Kelleher: Expresses broad opposition to many sections of the bill which makes it difficult to enforce. They claim that the bill does not designate a new class of student, dictate how the waiver is to be implemented, or say how they are to be tracked, which they claim is difficult.

They propose many questions regarding the bill which must, to their mind, be answered before passage.

These include, are the benefits stackable with dual-veteran families or if the child qualifies for Federal Benefits? If a veteran has multiple children, can the waiver be split between them, or only granted to one? And how does this relate to the National Guard Waiver, which this bill currently does not cover, i.e., can a veteran use the National Guard Waiver and their child use the Veteran Waiver?

They also postulate that tracking is necessary by an organization that can do so effectively, which colleges and universities cannot do on their own. In addition, funding must stay uniform in these pursuits to allow creation of a state agency to track these credits and their use, which this bill does not include.

Reported by: Tom Atwood

Date: 3/25/2026