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Good Morning Senator Maynard, Representative Hennessy and members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs. My name is Heather Sandler and I am a US Navy Veteran, a member of the Connecticut Women's Veteran Network (CT VETNET) and a social worker who received her Masters of Social Work in May 2010.

I served ten plus years on active duty loading bombs and missiles on F/A-18 fighter jets. I was deployed four different times for six months at a time. I am a Veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. I served at Naval Air Station Paxtuent River, Maryland during September 11, 2001 and stood guard for 18 hours that day (9/11/2001).

I am submitting written testimony requesting that you pass Proposed Bill 5058, An Act Concerning College Tuition and Fee Waivers for Veterans. Last session I testified before this very committee about closing the loopholes in the tuition waiver and ending the abuse of the privileged program. I am sorry that I could not testify in person today. I understand the importance of speaking out and my responsibility to reach back and help other veterans.

With the loopholes in the Tuition Waiver closed there will be less abuse of the waiver and the truly deserving and hardworking men and women from Connecticut could complete their degrees in half the time if the tuition waiver were available to them for summer course work. As a recent graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Social Work I have experienced having to pay out of pocket to take an extra class, because the tuition waiver could not be used. This put a tremendous amount of financial and emotional stress on myself and my family, especially as a non-traditional student. If I would have had the ability to use the tuition waiver for summer course work I could have finished my degree program in less than three years.

I was unable to receive the tuition waiver for summer classes but believe that going forward others might be able to benefit from Proposed Bill 5058.

This committee continues to work tirelessly on behalf of veterans of Connecticut and hope that going forward you will continue to do that.

Thank you for your time and consideration and know you will pass this important bill to protect our veterans and encourage higher education.