



Connecticut Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
February 27, 2014 Public Hearing

Testimony in favor of
HB 5207 AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE CREDIT FOR MILITARY TRAINING

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, Senator Boucher, Representative LeGeyt, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am Dawn A. McDaniel, Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce seeks to foster growth and opportunity for veteran-owned businesses and veterans transitioning to the workforce.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce represents the voice of over 42,000 veteran owned businesses in the state, accounting for 8% of the state's GDP. Studies have shown that Veterans operate successful businesses and are more likely to hire veterans. Over the past four years, the UConn Entrepreneur Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities has invested \$1.2 Million into veteran-owned businesses, which has resulted in \$7 Million in gross revenues and workforce opportunities. We support state legislation that lowers barriers to entry to business ownership, economic reintegration, workforce development, and transition to the civilian sector.

In Connecticut, the veteran unemployment rate is about 8% overall, however veteran unemployment for 18-24 year olds remains in double digits. These brave few support our nation's freedoms and offer unrelenting support in the state's time of need, yet return home to high unemployment, underemployment, and a restricted business market. Servicemembers, veterans, and their families need viable opportunities for a successful transition.

HB 5207 is a great start for supporting our state's veterans, but does not go far enough. Several higher education institutions in the state already take action on their own to translate military training and education to college credit. We urge the committee to change may to shall in the proposed language. Doing so will send a message to veterans and civilians alike that military experience has value.

Primarily, this is an issue of retention and opportunity. When military servicemembers leave the Armed Forces, they can obtain immediate residency in any state in the nation. We want veterans to know that while others states may have better weather and lower costs of living, there are better educational opportunities in Connecticut.

We support HB 5207 and appreciate the committee's efforts to acknowledge the value of military service and training, and we look forward to serving as a resource to this committee. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.