OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY)
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

DoD-State Liaison Office

February 16, 2016

Senator Dante Bartolomeo
Representative Roberta Willis
Joint Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
Legislative Office Building, Room 1800
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairman Bartolomeo and Chairwoman Willis,

My name is Colonel (Ret) Harold Cooney. I am the Northeast Region Liaison for the Department of Defense State Liaison Office in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. Our mission is to be a resource to state policymakers addressing the issues that affect the quality of life of our military and their families.

I am writing in support of language represented in House Bill 5071, being considered before your Committee on February 18, 2016. Our office looks specifically at issues that affect our military and their families and then pursue best practice language in all 50 state statutes to reach a desired outcome. One of the new issues this year is interstate licensing for distance education.

Department of Education (DoEd) policy (34 CFR § 600.9) specifies that states are responsible for the education delivered to students residing within their borders, regardless of where the education originates. Military members engaged in off-duty education may be re-assigned to states where their school may not have a license to provide educational services. Some schools may not obtain a license for the few military members enrolled, requiring the military student to delay completion or start again with another licensed school.

Our Service members move approximately every two – three years and may be assigned in states where their schools are not licensed. When they move, members may lose substantial academic credit if they are transferred to states where there is no agreement allowing them to continue taking distance education courses from their out-of-state institution.

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) has established agreements among states where students reside (host states) and states where institutions are principally located (home states) to facilitate efficient oversight of educational services. The four regional higher education compacts: New England Board of Higher Education, Midwestern Higher Education Compact, Southern Region Education Board and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education collectively sign institutions to agreements within each respective region.

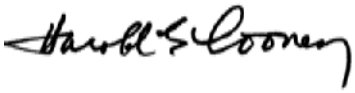
NC-SARA has included a provision in their agreements to accommodate the transient nature of military service. States can set the stage for reciprocity by passing legislation supporting these agreements.

As of February 11, 2016, SARA-enabling legislation has passed in 33 states and the District of Columbia, legislation is pending in four states and eight states have determined that no legislation is needed to enable participation in SARA. Thirty-six (36) states have joined one of the four regional SARA compacts.

HB5071 provides the mechanism for Connecticut to join this rapidly growing movement to remove one more hurdle experienced by our Service men and women as they proudly serve our great nation.

Thank you for your service to our nation and to the citizens of Connecticut and for your continued support of our military and their families. Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 571-309-7598, or by email: harold.e.cooney.civ@mail.mil

Sincerely,



Harold E. Cooney
State Liaison - Northeast Region (CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
Defense State Liaison Office
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy)