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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony for the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities Assembly Bill 515 Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021

Thank you Chairman Murphy and committee members for holding a public hearing and allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 515, bipartisan legislation that eases the residency requirements for military veterans to take advantage of the GI Bill program in Wisconsin.

It is always commendable for us to help veterans who have sacrificed so much to ensure that we remain the land of the free. While AB 515 does just that, it also tries to address the worker shortage crisis we are facing right now in our state.

With this bill, I am confident that we will be able to encourage more of this desirable population to move to Wisconsin and make our state a permanent home. As a result, we will have more people here to fill the more than 100,000 jobs that are currently available.

AB 515 attempts to accomplish this by modifying the residency requirement for the tuition and fee remission program for certain military veterans and their spouses and children who are enrolled in University of Wisconsin System institutions and technical colleges.

Under current state law, qualifying veterans and their spouses and 17- to 25-year-old children are eligible for full remission of tuition and fees at UW System schools and technical colleges for up to eight semesters or 128 credits, whichever is longer.

It is currently required that a veteran must be a resident of this state when he or she entered military service or for at least five consecutive years immediately before they register at a UW System school or technical college.

AB 515 lowers the five-year requirement to three years. We decided to make this change because the federal GI Bill ends after three years. This will ensure that a student can take advantage of the state program without having their education interrupted.

Our legislation also eliminates the provision that a student must be a Wisconsin resident at the time of entry into active duty as a condition of eligibility for the nonresident tuition exemption for veterans. By making this change, veterans will be able to qualify for in-state tuition at the time they enroll at a UW System institution.

This should also make it more attractive for veterans and their families to move to our great state and help our economy recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. It truly is a win-win for everyone.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony and I hope that you will consider supporting AB 515. I would also like to thank all of my co-authors for all the hard work they put into drafting this legislation. I can now answer any questions if you have them.