

Testimony on H.739 to House Education

Good afternoon, Mr Chair, Madam Vice-Chair, and Committee –

Thank you for the invitation to introduce to you H.739, an act relating to raising awareness of military-related post secondary opportunities. Specifically, this bill is asking for two things; one, that in the framework used in each secondary (high) school for Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs), all military-related options for achieving career success are offered to students; and two, that in all publications provided by VSAC, students and their families have information on all military-related options available for paying for technical certification and college degree programs.

From the Agency of Education's website: Personalization is "a learning process in which schools help students assess their own talents and aspirations, plan a pathway toward their own purposes, work cooperatively with others in challenging tasks, maintain a record of explorations, and demonstrate their learning against clear standards in a wide variety of media, all with the close support of adult mentors and guides." (This from the National Association of Secondary School Principals)

The State of Vermont describes the PLP as "a student's road map as they progress through their educational experience, informing choices through those years and beyond. PLPs not only help articulate and clarify students' goals and needs but also are a reflection of the importance of student agency in learning..." "Creating Personalized Learning Plans provides students the opportunity to reflect upon their learning and shape their future and enables the adults in their lives to better understand each student as a unique individual."

My understanding as a School Board member is that PLPs are meant to provoke a student and their family to think deeply about the choices available to them to assist them with planning for their future, to ensure both financial success and personal fulfillment with their careers. As the Legislature enabled the PLP legislation, it behooves us to make the process as comprehensive, clear, and simple for families as we can.

For those of you who are wondering just what those military-related options may be, a list would include: participating in a synchronous apprenticeship program with an employer and enlistment with the National Guard during a student's later high school years; enlisting in a National Guard unit after graduation where a member would receive skills training, often leading to valuable certifications and the opportunity to attend a full-time or part-time degree program (including through graduate programs); the processes for enrolling at a Military Service academy, which includes a pathway through the National Guard (a little-known process); attendance at a public university/college or a private military college with an ROTC program; enlistment in an active-duty military branch, with the potential for extended Reserve service. All of these various pathways provide students and their families alternatives to taking out college loans or depleting savings accounts, while offering students the opportunity to pursue limitless dreams.

Currently, there are no comprehensive listings for a student in Vermont to access all of the military-related options that are available to them in one place, nor does VSAC list these options in their publications or invite the National Guard to participate in their Paying for College Nights. Students and their families are investing in the student's future by making these important decisions, and they deserve to have full knowledge of the options available to them.

