

2025 Testimony to House Ed on H.87- PLPs with military options

Good morning, Mr Chair, Mr Vice-Chair, and Committee –

Thank you for the invitation to introduce to you H.87, an act relating to raising awareness of military-related post secondary opportunities. H.87 is similar to last year's H.739, in part, which passed your Committee and the House in the Miscellaneous Education bill, but ended up staying on the wall in Senate Ed at the end of the session. In a nutshell, this bill asks 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.

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, advisors, and mentors, 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 and clear for students 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 those adults advising them alternatives to taking out college loans or depleting savings accounts, while offering students the opportunity to pursue limitless dreams.

The need for this language came to the VT National Guard & Veterans Affairs Caucus during a Q & A session at Norwich University where many of our fellow legislators whose children are high school students bemoaned the fact that they were not aware of the military options that their student could pursue. We learned that school counselors were often unfamiliar with the myriad of military options available to high school students and that many schools relegate the military recruiter to a back room during their obligatory one visit per school year. Families are investing in a student's

future by making these important decisions, and they deserve to have full knowledge of the options available to them to make those dreams a reality.