

Thanks for the opportunity to testify in support of S.130 yesterday. Committee Chair Sen Bongartz asked me to email a few notes/highlights from my testimony:

- Vermont National Guard Fully supports S. 130 which will make permanent the provision in the Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program (VTNGTBP) for VTNG members to pursue a second bachelor's degree or master's degree IAW program requirements. Without S.130, the ability to pursue those degrees will **sunset on June 30th, 2025**
- We request that the language in the bill clearly states that pursuing an associate's degree IS still part of the VTNGTBP.
- We also request that the Senate Education Committee works with the appropriate Senate committees to **restore \$100K that was removed** from the VTNGTBP appropriation for FY26 by the House Appropriations Committee. We feel strongly that it is important that the VTNGTBP receive the full funding amount of \$1.3M. Year over year (on average) since 2018, Vermont National Guard members of used a higher percentage of the total amount appropriated. We forecast steady growth in the usage of the VTNGTBP and want to ensure allocated funds will support that growth.

WRT to the current language in the bill (s) that makes pursuing an associate's degree confusing, please see below:

We noticed that the two NG Tuition Benefit bills, [S.130](#) and [H.68](#), would eliminate the current statute language that makes a two-year associates degree eligible. The law currently allows for an "undergraduate certificate or degree". The bills propose that only a baccalaureate degree or graduate degree are eligible. See language below.

Current statute language:

§ 2857(c)(1)(C): be enrolled at UVM, a Vermont State College, or any other college or university located in Vermont in a program that leads to an undergraduate certificate or degree or at an eligible training institution in a program that leads to a certificate or other credential recognized by VSAC;

S. 130 version of § 2857(c)(1)(C), starting on Page 3, Line 18 of S.130:

(C) be enrolled at UVM, a Vermont State College, or any other college or university located in Vermont in a program that leads to an undergraduate certificate ~~or, a~~ baccalaureate degree, or a graduate degree, or at an eligible training institution in a program that leads to a certificate or other credential recognized by VSAC;

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee and thank you for your support.

Best,

Hank Harder