

Good afternoon Education Committee. I am Representative Brandy Pyle from District 22 which encompasses rural Cass county and a little bit of Fargo and West Fargo. I am here today to introduce HB 1125 for your consideration.

HB 1125 updates definition of a dependent of a veteran for purposes of free tuition in institutions of higher education in the state. This bill came from conversations with the department of veteran affairs.

Currently, as you can see in section 1a of the bill, the state allows for free tuition for a child, step child, spouse, widow, or widower to a resident veteran as defined in chapter 37-01-40 of our century code.

The proposed changes add spouse, widow, or widower of a veteran in section 1b to be eligible for free tuition as long as the spouse, widow, widower is a resident of this state or was a resident of the state at the time of death or determination of total disability.

It also adds that a stepchild's other parent has been a resident of the state, for the stepchild's eligibility. For example, the service member no longer lives in ND, and is killed or the determination of total disability is occurs, then based on the residency of the child and stepchild's other parent, they would qualify for free tuition.

The changes proposed in 1c allows for free tuition for the spouse, widow, widower, child and stepchild of the veteran as long as the spouse, widow, widower, child's or stepchild's other parent, establishes residency in the state and maintains that residency for a period of 5 years immediately preceding the spouse's, widow's, widower's, child or step child's enrollment. The House education committee worked to create a clear definition of step child's other parent.

In many situation, families of service members change their residency to the states when they move to with their service member is stationed, but the service member may not due to varied reasons.

In the last part of the bill brings the requirement of a veteran to be a resident of ND from 10 years to 5 years prior to the request of the tuition waiver. This will be in line with the requirement of a surviving spouse.

Our families want to be here. They want to raise their families, go to school, and live in this state.

I thank you for your time and consideration and ask for a do pass recommendation for HB 1125. I now stand for any questions.