

SENATE BILL 2225

Testimony before the North Dakota Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

By

**Mark Landis
Burleigh County Veterans Service Officer**

January 29, 2021

Mister Chairman, members of the committee, good morning. My name is Mark Landis. I have been the veterans service officer in Burleigh County for 17 years and currently serve as president of the Professional Veterans Advocates of North Dakota.

I am here to support Senate Bill 2225, which would change the definition of qualifying dependents of veterans for tuition waiver purposes. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I would also like to thank Senator Dever for bringing this bill forward.

Under current law, dependents may qualify for waiver of tuition at state institutions of higher education if the veteran has a combined 100% service-connected disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). If this bill is passed, the disability threshold would be lowered to 50%. There are good and sufficient reasons to support this legislation.

Disability ratings are assigned according to reduced average earning capacity. A veteran with a 50% disability rating may also experience a 50% reduction of earning capacity. VA compensation does not typically replace all of the income that is lost as a result of not being able to pursue a robust and fulfilling career.

Most parents provide some level of financial support to their college age children. In fact, it has become an expectation in today's society. That is very difficult to do with limited income. Passage of this bill not only benefits students. It benefits disabled veterans by preserving their subsistence level of income. In a broader perspective, it also benefits society by encouraging more people to pursue higher education.

The State of North Dakota has established precedent in this regard. The state has recognized 50% is a very significant level of disability by approving benefits such as a property tax credit, free annual passes to state parks, and reduced fees for fishing licenses. We are not asking the legislature to establish a new benefit program; rather, simply to establish consistency in the application of state benefits for veterans.

I respectfully request you to vote "do pass" on this bill.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I will stand for your questions.