



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Testimony for the Assembly Committee on Colleges and
Universities
Assembly Bill 12
June 8, 2023**

Thank you, Chairman Murphy and members of the committee for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 12.

This bill provides veterans with more opportunities to take advantage of Wisconsin's GI Bill and attract more people to move to our state and bolster our workforce.

AB 12 modifies the residency requirement for the tuition and fee remission program for certain military veterans, their spouses, and children who are enrolled in University of Wisconsin-System institutions and Wisconsin's technical colleges.

Under current state law, qualifying veterans and their spouses and 17- to 25-year-old children are eligible for full remission of tuition and fees at UW-System schools and technical colleges for up to eight semesters or 128 credits, whichever is longer. Currently, a veteran must be a resident of this state when he or she entered military service or for at least five consecutive years immediately before registering at a tech college or university.

AB 12 lowers the five-year requirement to three years. We decided to make this change because the federal GI Bill ends after three years. This will ensure that a veteran's education is not interrupted.

The bill also eliminates the provision that a student must be a Wisconsin resident at the time of entry into active duty as a condition of eligibility for the nonresident tuition exemption for veterans. By making this change, veterans will be able to qualify for in-state tuition at the time they enroll at a UW-System institution.

Our veterans bravely served this nation and bring leadership and value to our communities and employers. This bill gives veterans more security to complete their education here and helps to keep these highly desirable workers in Wisconsin after they graduate.

Thank you for your time and I hope you consider supporting Assembly Bill 12. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.



STATE SENATOR

Eric Wimberger

DISTRICT 30

Testimony on Assembly Bill 12

Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

Thursday, June 8, 2023

Chairman Murphy and Members,

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony on Assembly Bill 12, which would modify the residency requirement for the tuition and fee remission program for certain veterans and their spouses and children enrolled in University of Wisconsin System institutions and technical colleges.

Under current state law, qualifying veterans, their spouses and 17- to 25-year-old children are eligible for full remission of tuition and fees at UW System schools and technical colleges for up to eight semesters or 128 credits, whichever is longer. It is currently required that a veteran must be a resident of this state when he or she entered military service or for at least five consecutive years immediately before they register at a UW System school or technical college.

This bill will help provide veterans with more opportunities to utilize Wisconsin's GI Bill by lowering the residency requirement from five years to three years. Three years is generally when the federal GI Bill ends.

With a national worker shortage sweeping the country, it is vitally important we do everything we can to attract hardworking, motivated people to move to our state and join our workforce. I believe these program modifications will make it easier for our veteran population to make Wisconsin their permanent home.

Thank you for hearing my testimony, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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ALVERNO COLLEGE
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CARTHAGE COLLEGE
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
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WISCONSIN'S PRIVATE, NONPROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
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MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN
MILWAUKEE INSTITUTE OF ART & DESIGN
MILWAUKEE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
MOUNT MARY UNIVERSITY
NASHOTAH HOUSE
NORTHLAND COLLEGE
RIPON COLLEGE
ST. NORBERT COLLEGE
VITERBO UNIVERSITY
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN COLLEGE

TESTIMONY

By

**Rebecca Larson, Senior Vice President for Advocacy
Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU)
and
Matthew J. Schroeder, Director - Office of Military & Veterans Services
Edgewood College
on
Assembly Bill 12
to
Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
June 8, 2023**

Chair Murphy and members of the Committee, my name is Rebecca Larson. I am Senior Vice President for Advocacy with the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, or WAICU, the official organization recognized in state law as representing the 23 private, nonprofit colleges and universities in Wisconsin and their 52,000 students.

With me today is Matthew J. Schroeder, the Director of Military and Veterans Services at Edgewood College here in Madison. The veterans grant private, nonprofit was enacted in the spring of 2020 and includes a \$2,000 maximum grant per semester or session for the qualifying veteran, spouse, or dependent with a required match by the participating institutions. WAICU members support this effort to shorten the residency requirement; our members value the service of our nation's military personnel and are committed to their educational success. Matthew will now share some more information with you and his experience with the program and our support of Assembly Bill 12.

Good afternoon, Committee members and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Matthew J. Schroeder, and I am the Director of the Office of Military & Veterans Services at Edgewood College. I have been the leader of our Military & Veterans Services program for the past 12 years. As you can imagine, during that time, I have worked with a great number of students who have sought use of military and veterans' benefits.

I have seen a number of changes in Federal GI Bill programs that have removed outdated chapters while revising remaining benefits, to include expanded eligibility for current servicemembers, veterans, and their families. During that same time, the State of Wisconsin has also revised and expanded some of the benefits eligible to current servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Most notable for today's conversation have been changes to the Wisconsin GI Bill and the passage of the Wisconsin Veterans Grant for Private Non-Profit Schools in 2020. Both benefits have been crucial to the success of Wisconsin's military & veteran

connected student populations. It is important to thank the legislature for all their work on both programs. It is also important to remember that the work does not end because as times change, needs change.

This is evident even with Wisconsin Veterans Benefits. Last summer I was working with a student veteran who had served in the Army Reserve. The student veteran had moved to Wisconsin from Minnesota, exactly six (6) days before the start of the semester because they were granted late admission to our one-year Accelerated Post-Baccalaureate Program in Nursing. Unfortunately, the student veteran would not qualify for the Veterans Education Grant because they had already received a bachelor's degree and the student would not qualify for the Wisconsin Veterans Grant for Private Non-Profit Schools because they had moved to Wisconsin six (6) days prior to enrolling in courses. In conversations with this student veteran since they started courses, they had found that they loved Wisconsin and wanted to stay. However, it was likely that they would have to move home to Minnesota after graduation given additional costs they will incur.

And that student veteran's situation is not unique. In the past six (6) months I have had seven (7) students that have reached out to me about the benefits they may be eligible for while attending Edgewood College. After sorting through a variety of information with them, it was determined that because they had served in the guard or reserve, but had not compiled enough Active-Duty time, or they had passed their delimiting date, they were not eligible for Federal GI Bill programs. When looking at the possibility of eligibility for Wisconsin Veterans benefits, unfortunately, these same students would have been ineligible as well because they had moved to Wisconsin within the past five (5) years, eliminating the Wisconsin Veterans Grant for Private Non-Profit Schools, and they did not meet eligibility for the Veterans Education Grant because of their degree level, active duty requirements, the time elapsed since the end of their service, or income restraints.

That brings us to where we all are today. We are all committed to continuing to do the work to support our current servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Part of this work is to review the residency requirement for both the Wisconsin GI Bill and the Wisconsin Veterans Grant for Private Non-Profit Schools. The current residency requirement of five (5) years has been a benchmark that made sense when it was first put in place. However, given the desire to attract more veterans to the State of Wisconsin, whether to fill critical skills gaps in employment, or in general, because of the value that we know veterans can bring, this residency requirement can be cumbersome, or even a deterrent to some veterans who may otherwise consider Wisconsin as their future home.

Thank you for holding this hearing today and for your attention to the important issue of supporting veterans and their families in their pursuit of an education at an institution that is the best fit for them.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information or if we can be helpful in any way.

The American Legion,
Department of Wisconsin
2930 American Legion Dr.
Portage WI 53901
(608) 745-1090
wilegion.org



Founded on four pillars:
• Veterans Affairs &
Rehabilitation
• National Security
• Americanism
• Children & Youth

The mission of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin is to provide service to veterans, their families and their communities.

Chair Murphy and members of the Committee on Colleges and Universities

Thank you for holding this hearing on AB-12 relating to tuition and fee remission for certain veterans and their dependents. I also want to thank the authors and their staffs for the work they have put into this proposal.

The American Legion is the largest Veterans Service Organization in the Nation. In Wisconsin, we have approximately 50,000 members. We have just over a century of advocating for veterans, service members and their families.

Assembly Bill 12 is another economic development tool for Wisconsin. Current law is not an incentive for recently discharged service members to relocate to Wisconsin. We see many employers looking for skilled employees. We need to grow the workforce in Wisconsin not provide disincentive to in migration.

The last legislature adopted and the Governor signed Act 158 providing for the recruitment of veterans with medical skills. Is it good policy to recruit these needed skills and then charge them non-resident tuition and fees to bring them current with Wisconsin licensing requirements?

The reduction or elimination of this residency requirement is a step in the right direction. Resident tuition is always lower than non-resident tuition. The sooner we can get the recruited residents of Wisconsin paying resident tuition the better. This is another tool for industry to sell this state to skilled workers. The same reasons apply to the remission of fees.

Another important change this bill provides, is reducing the cost to educate dependents. This is important for some separating service members. Does the spouse need to complete requirements for Wisconsin certification in a profession. Are children starting their post-secondary school education? It needs to be affordable if I am going to accept a position in Wisconsin.

We must remember this bill is about tools for ensuring the Wisconsin economy has sufficient skilled employees to grow.

We thank you for your consideration of this issue and urge you to recommend to the Assembly adoption.

Paul Fisk
Legislative Chair
The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin



**STATEMENT OF
AL LABELLE
DAV WISCONSIN BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY
JUNE 8, 2023**

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Emerson, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Good Morning! Thank you for allowing DAV (Disabled American Veterans) this opportunity to present our view on Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12) **relating to:** *tuition and fee remission or grants for certain veterans and their dependents enrolled in the University of Wisconsin System, a technical college, or a private nonprofit institution of higher education; and the University of Wisconsin System nonresident tuition exemption for certain veterans.*

As you may know, DAV is a Congressionally Chartered, VA-Accredited, charitable veterans service organization (VSO) comprised of over one million wartime service-disabled veterans, nationwide. In Wisconsin, we have nearly 15,000 members.

Each year, DAV helps more than one million veterans with Benefits, Transportation, Advocacy, Employment, and Volunteerism. Well over eighty percent (80%) of our total expenditures go to Service. All our members are wartime wounded, injured or ill veterans, many of them severely. They have sacrificed much in defense of our freedoms.

AB 12 modifies the tuition and fee remission program for qualifying veterans, their spouses and their 17- to 25-year-old children enrolled in the University of Wisconsin (UW) System and Wisconsin Technical College System, including graduate programs. The program provides tuition remission for 128 credits or 8 semesters, whichever is longer. The tuition and fee remission program is also known as the Wisconsin GI Bill.

Under existing law, to qualify for the program veterans must be a current Wisconsin resident who was either a Wisconsin resident at the time of entry into active military service or a Wisconsin resident for at least five consecutive years preceding the beginning of any semester for which he or she is registered at a qualifying institution.

A qualifying veteran's spouse or child may also use the tuition and fee remission program if the veteran has been awarded a service-connected disability rating of at least 30% by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), died in the line of duty or died because of a service-connected disability. The spouse or child must meet the same residency requirements as the veteran.

AB 12 lowers from five years to three years the residency requirement for qualifying veterans, their spouses and children who were not residents of this state when he or she entered active military service.

The bill also modifies grant eligibility for qualifying veterans, their spouses and children enrolled in private nonprofit colleges. Under current law, the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) administers a grant program which makes grants to private nonprofit colleges to offset tuition charged to enrolled veterans, their spouses and children who qualify for the tuition and fee remission program.

AB 12 lowers from five years to three years the residency requirement for this grant program for those qualifying veterans, their spouses and children who were not residents of this state when he or she entered active military service.

Finally, the bill modifies the UW System nonresident tuition exemption for certain veterans. Under current law, a student veteran qualifies for the nonresident tuition exemption if he or she is a resident of and living in Wisconsin at the time of registering in the UW System and was a Wisconsin resident at the time of entry into active military service.

AB 12 eliminates the requirement that a student veteran must be a Wisconsin resident at the time of entry into active military service as a condition of eligibility for the nonresident tuition exemption for student veterans.

It is our belief that these modifications to the tuition and fee remission program will benefit qualified disabled veterans and their families who have sacrificed much and will attract a younger demographic to our state to further their education.

Thank you, Chairman Murphy for holding this important hearing and being a co-author of AB 12. Also, thank you to Rep. Shankland and Rep. Stubbs for adding their names as co-authors. Your actions honor the wartime service-disabled veterans whom we represent.

Pursuant to DAV National Resolution 217¹, DAV Wisconsin strongly supports AB 12 and urges this Committee to pass the bill in an expeditious manner.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Committee Members may have.

¹ Resolution 217, *Support Legislation to Improve and Protect Education and Employment Benefits for Disabled Veterans and Their Survivors* passed at DAV National Convention held in Orlando, Florida on August 6-9, 2022.



University Veteran Services
STUDENT AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities
2023 Assembly Bill 12

Tuition and fee remission or grants for certain veterans and their dependents enrolled in the University of Wisconsin System and nonresident tuition exemption for certain veterans

June 8, 2023

Chairman Murphy and members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Assembly Bill 12, relating to tuition and fee remission or grants for certain veterans and their dependents enrolled in the University of Wisconsin System, nonresident exemption for certain veterans.

My name is Joe Rasmussen, and I am the Director of University Veteran Services at UW-Madison. I am a veteran of the United States Marine Corps and served on active duty from 2002 to 2006. I am an alum of UW-Madison, where I earned my Master of Social Work, and I received my bachelor's degree in Social Work from UW-Whitewater. I have been supporting military connected students at UW-Madison for over a decade.

The mission of University Veterans Services is to support the Wisconsin Experience of military-connected students and their families by fostering personal transitions and pursuit of academic success. We certify both state and federal GI bills and advise students on the use of education benefits and assist students with applying for new benefits. University Veterans Services also develops programming to build community among our military-connected students, including peer support programs. We see on average over 800 students with military service and over 2,000 students who are children and spouses of veterans or current service members enrolled at UW-Madison. There were 871 students eligible for G.I. Bill benefits to attend school at UW-Madison last semester. We are also home to the UW-Madison Mission in Action Recovery Project, Odyssey Beyond Wars (a new program that allows veterans to earn 6 college credits, child care, and dinner at no cost to the veteran), and the Veteran Education to Workforce Affinity and Success Study (a grant funded local and national study looking at student veteran connection to campus and outcomes).

We would like to express our appreciation to Senator Wimberger and Representative Kitchens for sharing our goal in creating and facilitating a seamless process for veterans and their families



University Veteran Services

STUDENT AFFAIRS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

to navigate the benefits process. We remain focused on working with legislators on changes at the state level that focus attention on attracting and retaining the best student veterans and military-connected students to UW-Madison and institutions of higher education in Wisconsin.

The legislation would lower eligibility from five years to three years the durational residency requirement for veterans and their spouses and children under the tuition and fee remission program and other grant programs under certain circumstances. While this is certainly a change that would align the Wisconsin G.I. benefits with the timeline at the federal level, military connected students must navigate an array of applications and barriers that are unique to them do to their background. In the spirit of this bill, there are several considerations that would contribute to supporting or military connected students:

- Staffing levels: There is a need to keeping pace with staffing levels which directly and indirectly support military connected populations across the entire university. The 2022 Blue Ribbon Commission on Veterans recommended all campuses meet federal recommended staffing minimums of 1:200 staff to military-connected students.
- A need to update how the Wisconsin GI Bill is used, what it can be used for, and the process for application and administration to bring the program in line with the current landscape and better serve our military-connected students.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the impact this legislation would have on UW-Madison. If you have any questions, please reach out to me (Joe.Rasmussen@wisc.edu) or UW-Madison Senior Director of State Relations Crystal Potts at crystal.potts@wisc.edu or (608) 265-4105.



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Assembly Bill 12
Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
Representative Murphy
June 8, 2023

Chairman Murphy and Members of the Committee:

Technical colleges are proud to provide an education to over 7,800 veteran students annually. Additionally, over 1,600 veterans, spouses and dependents attend a technical college under the Wisconsin GI Bill each year. WTCS supported the original Wisconsin GI Bill and subsequent changes to this program. At the same time, the WTCS has advocated for greater State contributions to this program. Historically, the appropriation for this program has funded less than 20 percent of the actual costs as shown in the chart below. Accordingly, the WTCS is requesting that the Legislature provide additional resources to support this program expansion.

Thank you for your consideration.

| | Veterans, Spouses and Children | Total Tuition and Fees Remitted | State Reimbursed | Difference/Local Costs |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 2018 | 1,789 | \$4,149,686.21 | \$600,850.74 | \$(3,548,835.47) |
| 2019 | 1,832 | \$4,259,997.04 | \$593,054.10 | \$(3,666,942.94) |
| 2020 | 1,875 | \$4,285,675.02 | \$617,085.88 | \$(3,668,589.14) |
| 2021 | 1,566 | \$3,622,222.11 | \$579,761.97 | \$(3,042,460.14) |
| 2022 | 1,603 | \$3,848,183.26 | \$625,825.03 | \$(3,222,358.23) |



Office of Government Relations

Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706
www.wisconsin.edu

DATE: June 8, 2023

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

FROM: UW System Office of Government Relations

RE: Written Testimony on Assembly Bill 12

Thank you, Chairman Murphy and committee members, for providing the UW System (UWS) an opportunity to submit testimony on Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12). We thank Representatives Kitchens, Kurtz, and Steffen, and Senator Wimberger, for authoring this legislation and addressing a desire to attract more veterans and their families to Wisconsin higher education institutions.

The UW System, with 13 universities, has one of the most robust programs for veterans in the country. We strive to provide a welcoming higher educational setting for service members, veterans, and their families. Each of our universities has a veteran service department that provides comprehensive support to veterans. Dedicated campus staff assist veterans with transferring credits, navigating benefits, and connecting veterans with each other and the campus community.

UWS already provides qualifying veterans, spouses, and children full tuition and fee remission up to eight semesters or 128 credits. In FY22, UWS provided over \$28 million in tuition and fee remissions and related payments to veterans and their qualifying family members. Total tuition and fee remissions have increased every year since 2006. Yearly remission amounts for veterans have exceeded \$10 million annually since 2015. Over the past 5 years, remissions for children and spouses have gone up an average of 9% each year and are nearly \$17 million annually. In FY23 UWS provided a record-setting amount of over \$29 million in tuition and fee remissions. A table of remissions and payments for the last six years is attached. Please note the FY23 numbers are estimates.

Currently, a non-Wisconsin veteran is required to have residency in Wisconsin for five years prior to entering military service or before registering at a UW System school to receive this benefit. This requirement for the non-Wisconsin veteran also allows for the spouse and children of a 30% or more disabled veteran to receive tuition and fee remission. Assembly Bill 12 lowers the residency requirement to three years, expanding access to this benefit to more veterans and their families.

Assembly Bill 12 also provides an opportunity for more veterans to access in-state tuition rates. The bill eliminates the requirement that a veteran be a Wisconsin resident when entering active duty to receive resident tuition rates. Again, this will expand access to our institutions for more veterans who now reside in our state.

(Cont.)

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation.

UW System Veteran, Spouse and Children Remissions & Payments

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Veterans, Spouses and Children</u> | <u>Total Remissions & Payments</u> | <u>State Reimbursement</u> | <u>Difference/UW Paid Costs</u> |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2017 | 3,651 | \$ 23,927,758 | \$ 4,717,039 | \$ 19,210,719 |
| 2018 | 3,676 | \$ 24,511,335 | \$ 4,845,136 | \$ 19,666,199 |
| 2019 | 3,808 | \$ 25,885,222 | \$ 4,811,118 | \$ 21,074,104 |
| 2020 | 3,878 | \$ 26,625,645 | \$ 4,961,094 | \$ 21,664,551 |
| 2021 | 3,923 | \$ 27,771,024 | \$ 5,310,899 | \$ 22,460,125 |
| 2022 | 3,868 | \$ 28,865,218 | \$ 5,361,333 | \$ 23,503,885 |
| 2023* | 3,890 | \$ 29,087,172 | \$ 5,414,859 | \$ 23,672,313 |

we do not yet have final FY23 state reimbursement amounts so the 2023 numbers are an estimate