
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 560 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY DEASY, SCHLOSSBERG, HOWARD, HILL-EVANS, SANCHEZ,
D. WILLIAMS, CIRESI, WEBSTER, SCHWEYER, WARREN, SAINATO,
PISCIOTTANO, MATZIE, POLINCHOCK AND DELLOSO,
FEBRUARY 22, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, FEBRUARY 22, 2021

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, providing for the Combat-to-college
3 Program.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Title 51 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated
7 Statutes is amended by adding a chapter to read:

8 CHAPTER 88

9 COMBAT-TO-COLLEGE PROGRAM

10 Sec.

11 8801. Scope of chapter.

12 8802. Definitions.

13 8803. Student veterans program.

14 8804. Requirements.

15 8805. Statewide Combat-to-college Task Force.

16 8806. Private education institutions.

17 8807. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

1 8808. Reporting provisions.

2 8809. Expiration.

3 § 8801. Scope of chapter.

4 This chapter relates to the Combat-to-college Program.

5 § 8802. Definitions.

6 The following words and phrases when used in this chapter
7 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
8 context clearly indicates otherwise:

9 "Active military service." Active service in any of the
10 armed services or armed forces of the United States or of this
11 Commonwealth.

12 "Community college." An institution established and operated
13 under Article XIX-A of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30,
14 No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949.

15 "Department." The Department of Military and Veterans
16 Affairs of the Commonwealth.

17 "Private education institution." An institution within this
18 Commonwealth that is legally authorized to grant degrees or
19 career and technical certifications and that is not statutorily
20 established as an instrumentality of this Commonwealth nor a
21 State-related institution or community college.

22 "State institution of higher education." A State system
23 institution, a State-related institution or a community college
24 located within this Commonwealth.

25 "State-related institution." A nonprofit institution that
26 meets all of the following:

27 (1) Is legally authorized to grant degrees.

28 (2) Offers needed, specified higher education services
29 in the public interest of this Commonwealth.

30 (3) Is statutorily established as an instrumentality of

1 this Commonwealth.

2 (4) Receives a direct annual Commonwealth appropriation.

3 "State system institution." A member university as provided
4 for in section 2002-A of the Public School Code of 1949.

5 "Student veteran." An individual who is attending or
6 planning to attend a State institution of higher education or
7 private education institution and is serving in the United
8 States Armed Forces, including a reserve component or National
9 Guard, or has served in the United States Armed Forces,
10 including a reserve component or National Guard, and who was
11 discharged or released from service under conditions other than
12 dishonorable.

13 "Task force." The Statewide Combat-to-college Task Force
14 established under section 8805 (relating to Statewide Combat-to-
15 college Task Force).

16 § 8803. Student veterans program.

17 Each campus of a State institution of higher education shall
18 provide the services and a coordinator described under section
19 8804 (relating to requirements) to help student veterans go from
20 combat to college in order to create a positive educational
21 environment for student veterans to successfully graduate from
22 universities and vocational degree programs while recognizing
23 the skills, training and experience associated with military
24 training.

25 § 8804. Requirements.

26 (a) Requirements.--Each State institution of higher
27 education shall do the following:

28 (1) For a campus that is not solely online, provide a
29 centralized geographic location on campus for student
30 veterans for admissions, class registration, financial aid

1 administration and the coordinator under subsection (b) to
2 the extent that funds are available.

3 (2) Provide outreach, information and advocacy
4 assistance to student veterans to help ensure that they
5 receive reasonable accommodations for a disability under
6 Federal and State laws.

7 (3) Develop programs to provide academic and career
8 counseling specifically for student veterans that may
9 include, but not be limited to, peer mentoring and peer
10 support programs.

11 (4) Develop programs to provide reasonable access to
12 specialized mental health counseling services or resources
13 for student veterans.

14 (5) Develop job search assistance programs designed for
15 a student veteran during a student veteran's enrollment and
16 for at least two years following the student veteran's
17 graduation.

18 (6) Not charge an admissions fee or similar fee for a
19 student veteran returning to the same education institution
20 that the student veteran attended prior to mobilization.

21 (7) Provide specific information on programs developed
22 or coordinated under this chapter and other information
23 relevant to student veterans on the institution's publicly
24 accessible Internet website.

25 (8) Provide postsecondary credit to student veterans for
26 military training while providing active military service if
27 the American Council on Education recommends that
28 postsecondary credit should be provided for military training
29 or provide preadmission counseling to provide a prospective
30 student veteran a detailed analysis of what postsecondary

1 credit will be accepted based on the student veteran's
2 military training.

3 (9) Provide a student veteran an alternative status that
4 reflects mobilization rather than a "W" or withdrawn status
5 on a student veteran's transcript at the student veteran's
6 request if the student veteran is being called to active
7 Federal or State duty.

8 (10) Provide for community-based collaborations to allow
9 the private sector to support combat-to-college programs
10 through financial and in-kind gifts.

11 (b) Coordinator duties.--Each State institution of higher
12 education shall designate a coordinator for each campus who
13 shall:

14 (1) Develop programs to promote a positive educational
15 environment for student veterans.

16 (2) Implement training programs for the staff relating
17 to identifying and assisting student veterans who may benefit
18 from the specialized services and resources developed or
19 coordinated under this chapter.

20 (3) Make recommendations to the State institution of
21 higher education's administration and the task force
22 concerning ways to improve the education of student veterans.

23 (4) Coordinate access to stress management, counseling
24 programs and other resources available.

25 (5) Coordinate with the department to educate student
26 veterans about available Commonwealth programs.

27 (6) Coordinate with the United States Department of
28 Veterans Affairs to educate student veterans on available
29 Federal benefits, including work-study programs offered by
30 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

1 (7) Coordinate activities, seminars and programs for
2 student veterans presented by veterans organizations.

3 (8) Coordinate campus activities and social events
4 designed for student veterans.

5 (9) Coordinate programs to assist student veterans in
6 locating employment and internships.

7 § 8805. Statewide Combat-to-college Task Force.

8 (a) Establishment and composition.--A Statewide Combat-to-
9 college Task Force shall be established, consisting of the
10 following members:

11 (1) Four members appointed by the Governor, one of whom
12 shall be from each of the following:

13 (i) a State system institution;

14 (ii) a State-related institution;

15 (iii) a community college; and

16 (iv) a private education institution that provides
17 services specified under section 8804 (relating to
18 requirements) to student veterans.

19 (2) One member appointed by the Governor who serves on
20 the State Veterans' Commission.

21 (3) The Chairman of the Pennsylvania Higher Education
22 Assistance Agency or a designee.

23 (4) The Secretary of Education or a designee.

24 (5) The Adjutant General or a designee.

25 (6) Three members appointed by the Governor who are
26 student veterans or former student veteran representatives.

27 (7) One Senator appointed by the President pro tempore
28 of the Senate, one Senator appointed by the Minority Leader
29 of the Senate, one member of the House of Representatives
30 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and

1 one member of the House of Representatives appointed by the
2 Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

3 (b) Terms.--Terms of members under subsection (a) shall be
4 as follows:

5 (1) The members under subsection (a) (1), (2), (3), (4),
6 (5) and (6) shall serve four-year terms.

7 (2) The members under subsection (a) (7) shall serve two-
8 year terms.

9 (c) Vacancies.--Any vacancy on the task force shall be
10 filled by the original appointing officer.

11 (d) Duties.--

12 (1) Assess, refine and recommend improvements for
13 outreach services to provide veterans with necessary
14 information regarding postsecondary opportunities upon return
15 from service and develop best practices to help veterans
16 graduate from this Commonwealth's postsecondary education
17 institutions.

18 (2) Review and approve annual applications of State
19 institutions of higher education that demonstrate compliance
20 with section 8804 in order to receive the "Combat-to-college
21 Certified" title.

22 (3) Review and approve annual applications from private
23 education institutions to receive a "Combat-to-college
24 Certified" title for voluntary compliance with this chapter.

25 (4) Promote partnerships with the United States
26 Department of Veterans Affairs that help reduce out-of-pocket
27 expenses to student veterans.

28 (5) Assess gaps in student support and policy that may
29 exist at the Federal level, including the Servicemen's
30 Readjustment Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 284) and the Federal Pell

1 Grant Program, and recommend changes in the Federal Student
2 Aid programs and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
3 Agency's programs to develop solutions that result in
4 unfettered access to postsecondary education opportunities.

5 (6) Provide ways to easily report accurate data on the
6 use and results of the programs authorized under this
7 chapter.

8 (7) Promote partnerships to provide financial resources
9 to help enable State institutions of higher education and
10 private education institutions to meet the State standards
11 authorized under this chapter.

12 (8) Receive comments and testimony from student veterans
13 and others.

14 (9) Annually report to the General Assembly on the use
15 and results of the programs described under this chapter.

16 § 8806. Private education institutions.

17 A private education institution shall be awarded an annual
18 "Combat-to-college Certified" status by the task force if the
19 private education institution voluntarily complies with State
20 standards for student veterans' programs as described in section
21 8804 (relating to requirements).

22 § 8807. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

23 (a) Department assistance.--The department may assist the
24 task force in the task force's duties.

25 (b) Funding.--The department may apply for Federal and
26 private funding for training, outreach and other expenses to
27 help enable State institutions of higher education and private
28 education institutions to meet the State standards authorized
29 under this chapter.

30 (c) Reports.--The department shall publish on the

1 department's publicly accessible Internet website the reports on
2 information collected under sections 8804 (relating to
3 requirements), 8805 (relating to Statewide Combat-to-college
4 Task Force), 8806 (relating to private education institutions)
5 and 8808 (relating to reporting provisions) with other
6 information the department deems useful to assist student
7 veterans.

8 § 8808. Reporting provisions.

9 Starting 90 days after the effective date of this section,
10 each State institution of higher education and private education
11 institution voluntarily deemed as "Combat-to-college Certified"
12 shall annually report to the department and to the task force
13 that the State institution of higher education or private
14 education institution offers the services described under
15 section 8804 (relating to requirements) and the utilization and
16 results of the services authorized under this chapter.

17 § 8809. Expiration.

18 This chapter shall expire 15 years from the effective date of
19 this section.

20 Section 2. This act shall take effect as follows:

21 (1) 51 Pa.C.S. §§ 8803 and 8804 shall take effect in one
22 year.

23 (2) The remainder of this act shall take effect in 60
24 days.