

Miranda Brilz
Vancouver, WA.
360-823-6419
brilzmir@gmail.com

February 4, 2020

When I was 17 and still in high school, I enlisted in the United States Navy. My parents had to sign waivers saying that they agreed to it but the concerns they had about my decision were prevalent. I had never talked seriously about joining the military; but after my parents divorce I grew more knowledgeable about our financial situation. I knew there was no money set aside for school and I didn't even know what I wanted to do. A deployment later and I was set on becoming a pastry chef. It was something I had enjoyed since I was a kid but never would have been able to afford attending without assistance. When I was medically retired due to PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder, I knew I had to do something I found joy in. Baking calmed my anxiety and made it easier for me to function in day to day life. My hands wouldn't shake while I was in the kitchen.

I was enraged when I was first told about this proposed bill that would stop veterans from being able to use their GI benefits for trade schools. We are at a time when trade schools aren't advertised like colleges and are seen as secondary. We need trade people! We need plumbers, electricians, bakers, chefs and windmill workers. People still have to eat, need lights on in their homes and the earth needs people to care for it. If we take away some of the educational benefits from veterans, you are saying that you don't care about what you have promised or what this country needs. Trade jobs keep their communities going in ways that suits never could; often without the praise, bonuses and time off to spend with family.

My teachers care more about my success than my chain of command ever did. In smaller classes, I can get individualized attention to perfect my skills rather than spew back facts in a lecture hall full of students. I feel ready to enter the workforce with my skills, knowing that I can be a functioning member of society - even with my disability. A cubicle is a nightmare to me but a kitchen is freedom. Freedom of expression - of creativity. I should be allowed to decide what will make ME successful.

Success isn't determined by how much money you make or how many years you went to college. It is defined by the feeling of satisfaction we get in our lives and the good we give back to society. By that definition, are you successful?

February 2, 2020

To Whom a May Concern,

As a current student of Oregon Culinary Institute, I can not express enough how great of a program this is. From the diversity of experience each Chef brings to hands on experience in the kitchens to management skills taught in the classroom, this program offers a well-rounded experience to prepare us for our next step in the industry. With the program accepting smaller amounts of students, it also provides the opportunity for focused student/teacher ratio, enhancing the learning and assistance needed for success. Students also gain cohesiveness going through the classes together, building on relationships.

As a veteran who served 20 years and been away from Oregon most of my career, this has afforded to me the best option to use my GI Bill and still be close to my family. This program and the ability to use my GI Bill is what has helped my transition but also allowed me to pursue a degree program that I wasn't able to while in the service. This is a dream of mine that I hope to continue to pursue.

For myself, the other Veterans attending and those hoping to attend in the future, that you please continue to include Oregon Culinary Institute under Pioneer Pacific College as an option for our benefits to be used.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Trenda Fletcher

2 February 2020

To Whom it may concern,

My name is David Langtry, and I am Iraq war veteran that is attending and has also completed my associate degree through Oregon Culinary Institute. I moved to Oregon to use my G.I. Bill for school and discovered that there were few schools that offered as complete a program as OCI does. They offer degree programs in hospitality management but diploma programs in baking and culinary. They are very comprehensive in the education that you receive, and it is taught by people with decades in the industry. It is especially impressive when you consider how much you learn in the time frame and at the cost that you pay. The School offers a ton of opportunities for students to volunteer for events and to work with talented chefs from around the world. On top of all of that, I have gotten two jobs through the school along with multiple job offers due to the opportunities I have had due to the school. As a combat veteran, I was pretty upset to hear that the state was considering not allowing schools like OCI to not use G.I. Bill money that someone like me has earned. I don't know where I would be if it weren't for all the positive guidance I have received from this school and I would feel bad for any Vet that doesn't at least have the option of attending this school.

Thank You,

David N. Langtry

Write letter why schools like OCI benefits Veterans.

Jacob Almanza

10 years in the United States Navy Submarine service

Ladies and Gentlemen

I joined the Navy as a submarine Culinary Specialist with the promise that I would be given college assistance for the vocation of my choice.

When I left the military with my background in cooking I choose to continue and expand that background. In just over a year I became the Sous Chef of a wonderful bistro in the Hudson Valley of New York. We made fun and eye catching food there. But I learned while working there that I had a lot to learn about the financial management of a restaurant.

That is why I have chosen to attend the Oregon Culinary Institute. The Hospitality Program has given me the tools and information that I need to open and run a successful restaurant. From the courses on food safety to classes on fine dining, I think that my time has been well spent.

To whom it may concern:

As a combat veteran that diffused over 150 IEDs in both peacetime and wartime efforts of Operation Iraqi freedom, my reintegration back into American Society was not automatic or without its challenges. There were key factors in this transition that were extremely helpful to me; the love and support of my wife and daughter, talking with well trained professionals at the VA to work through my issues, and finding a place to fit in and thrive professionally. These were all critical for me. In my situation had my abilities to establish these things been any more difficult then they had to be, it would have limited not only my recovery, but my ability to function as a tax paying member of this society.

I am currently a student at Oregon Culinary Institute (OCI). One of the types of school that is trying to be removed from the eligibility list for VA benefits. For a second, focus on the restaurant business, as a whole. The hospitality industry is a fast paced environment built around serving your community and filled with high pressure situations. To a lot of Veterans, this is a set of standards we are used to thriving to meet, and in a lot of cases, the lower stress of the hospitality industry compared to the life of a combat veteran is a real aid in recovery. This business helps you use the skills you have gained to build yourself a life outside of violence. To me any avenue our returning soldiers can walk down to get home, is worth protecting.

The Veteran unemployment percentage in Dec of 2019 was down to 2.9%, which at that time was the 16 month in a row it had been lower than the non-veteran rate. Why anyone would take any action to threaten that progress is beyond me. These schools lead us to jobs, they restore our ability to form community, and they provide a ladder for us to climb professionally. I'm not sure what the argument is for removing these schools, or making this process more stringent, but my gut tells me it's about money. There is no better financial investment then the men and women that serve this country. I remember the bullets overseas, I remember the explosions, and I remember the helicopters, I couldn't tell you what my paycheck was.

SrA Kyle Anthony Churchill,
Explosive Ordnance Disposal, USAF

To whom it may concern,

My name is Garrett McClatchey I am a vet who has served in the US Navy for the past 8 years. Amongst those 8 years I was a Culinary Specialist, I went through the culinary training "A" school in Fort Lee VA. It was minimal to the training I have received here at Oregon Culinary Institute.

While I was enlisted, the food that was cook for my fellow sailors mostly came from a can and there wasn't much "love" in what was cooked. It was dumped on a sheet tray and thrown in the oven and let there to dry, not much salt or pepper or really anything thrown in to add flavor. While I was in "A" school, I was shown how to break down a chicken into its six individual cuts. I was not taught how to separate the tenders from the breasts, I was not taught that I can take the carcass of a chicken and turn it into a stalk by simply adding a couple of herbs and spices and boil it. In fact, I was taught to throw it away and that there is no use for it.

My training here at Oregon Culinary Institute has shown me what could be done with not only chicken scraps; but what one can do with the scraps of vegetables, fish, and other meats. Full utilizations of the plants and animals that one might cook in a restaurant. Amongst learning full utilization, I have learned how to properly season food, and how to price the food that I have made. Such skills that will help me in the future for when I open my own restaurant.

My experience here has been amazing, the staff is extremely knowledgeable and help full. The courses are fast, but they make sure that you get and understand all the information. If you do not understand what you are learning they will stay after hours to make sure you understand. At the end of whatever diploma one chooses they help you find an externship anywhere in the US, that not only leads to more training but possible employment.

For this bill to pass, not only would it hurt vets such as myself in a school where you get to learn to develop an amazing skill, but it would hurt this institution. A lot of vets go to this school and love to learn how to cook. The way a kitchen is operated is much like the military. There are a lot of comradery that you don't get in many work places, I can't speak for all vets but I can speak for myself, and I thoroughly enjoy it.

V/R



Garrett McClatchey

To whom it may concern:

As a veteran attending the Oregon Culinary Institute (OCI) I have benefited in many aspects of my life when it comes to the education I have received during my time here. Being from California, I needed a job fairly quickly after moving to Portland for school and having OCI here has made it so job prospects in the culinary world aren't as daunting when you're just starting out. The transition from the classroom to a professional kitchen was made easier by OCI with their curriculum starting me at the very basics of cooking. Every lesson from my instructors only helps me grow stronger in my professional life. OCI also provides students like me with amazing volunteer opportunities at various local food events where we are able to meet and connect with chefs from across the country and in the area. Those contacts are great ways for us to find employers that are willing to work with someone starting from the bottom. The instructors at OCI have also given me a level of one-on-one attention that I never experienced when going through traditional schooling. The excitement and eagerness they show just proves that they care about the lessons they are giving and the students they are giving them too. I've learned how to better communicate with people in general that will benefit how I interact with my future coworkers. I'm being taught how to succeed from writing a resume, succeed at job interviews and to owning a business on top of the school curriculum. OCI is providing me with every tool I need to succeed.

Diffenderfer, Karissa

Sergeant, US Army