

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

CS/HB 45 — Educational Opportunities for Disabled Veterans

by Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee and Reps. Morales, Benjamin, and others (CS/SB 554 by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senators Cruz, Rodrigues, Taddeo, and Stewart)

The bill provides an education benefit to certain veterans who are residents and enrolled in a program of education approved by the federal educational assistance program. The bill would add a state award to what is provided in federal law for educational benefits to achieve a 100 percent award for tuition and fees. To qualify, the veteran must have been:

- Determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent for compensation;
- Determined to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent and have received disability retirement pay from a branch of the United States Armed Services; or
- Issued a valid identification card by the state Department of Veterans' Affairs which identifies the veteran as either having a 100 percent, service-connected permanent and total disability rating for compensation or who has a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent and receives disability retirement pay from a branch of the United States Armed Forces.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, a disabled veteran who receives a tuition benefit to attend a state university, a Florida College System institution, a career center operated by a school district, or a charter technical career center under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, but who does not qualify for the 100 percent eligibility tier federally, is eligible for tuition and fees. The monetary award is equal to the difference between the portion of tuition and fees authorized under federal law and the full amount of tuition and fees charged by the institution attended. The bill specifies that the amount awarded by the state is not to be determined until after federal benefits are applied.

Each educational institution included in this bill must annually report to the Board of Governors of the State University System and the State Board of Education, as appropriate, the number and value of all fee waivers granted.

The bill provides that a disabled veteran who receives this award must remain in compliance with other statutory requirements applying to veterans and other students who receive educational benefits.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.
Vote: Senate 38-0; House 115-0