



August 9, 2024

The Business Council of New York State, Inc.
111 Washington Avenue, Suite 400
Albany, New York 12210

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Gov. Hochul,

As you are acutely aware, New York State is facing critical shortages in skilled labor across various sectors. Under your leadership, the state is taking significant steps to address this through diverse workforce training investments. As these efforts continue, we must ensure that particular attention is given to providing NYS veterans with the opportunities they deserve to upskill and reskill to fit the needs of all employers.

To that end, I'm writing today to urge you to sign S.8596A (Scarcella-Spanton)/A.9205A (Buttenschon), which would expand eligibility under the state's Veterans Tuition Awards (VTA) Program. Currently, only combat veterans are eligible to take advantage of this vital program, both denying thousands of non-combat veterans the opportunity to afford higher education and sending the wrong message about how New York views essential military service, regardless of how or where you've served.

By broadening eligibility for the VTA Program, we will ensure individuals already equipped with training, experience, and industry-specific skills essential for fields like healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and public service have increased opportunities to belong and participate in the workforce. Military training fosters leadership, discipline, adaptability, and a strong work ethic, making veterans invaluable assets in addressing workforce demands. This is especially true in finding and retaining workers.

Investing in veterans' education yields economic benefits, such as increased earning potential, higher tax contributions, and reduced social service dependence. Veterans with the opportunity to continue their education are more likely to start businesses and stimulate local economies through consumer spending, enhancing economic stability statewide. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, veterans are 45% more likely to become independent employees. Currently, 1 out of 10 small businesses in the U.S. are veteran-owned, with a total of over 2.4 million businesses.

The VTA Program legislation, S.8596A (Scarcella-Spanton)/A.9205A (Buttenschon), represents a crucial investment in the future of our veterans, our workforce, and the statewide economy. We must ensure that all New York veterans have access to the educational opportunities they deserve so they can lay down deeper roots as New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Paul Zuber
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