

SENATE MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

**SENATE, No. 2855**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: JUNE 13, 2024

The Senate Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2855.

This bill extends eligibility for Military Dependents Scholarships to students enrolled in approved career and technical education programs and to dependents of certain military members who served in Operation Freedom's Sentinel and Operation Inherent Resolve.

P.L.2015, c.117 established Military Dependents Scholarships for the costs of undergraduate study at a public or independent institution of higher education to the spouse, child, or other eligible dependent of a New Jersey resident who is killed, officially listed as "Missing in Action" by the United States Department of Defense, or totally and permanently disabled as certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as a consequence of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn. As of November 2021, no scholarships have been awarded through this law. Additionally, the Military Dependents Scholarship Fund has not yet been established, as no State appropriations or private donations have been made for such fund. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority will establish the fund when an initial appropriation or donation is received for the fund's purpose.

This bill extends eligibility for Military Dependents Scholarships to students enrolled in a career and technical education program approved by the board of trustees of the Military Dependent Scholarship Fund. The bill updates the list of qualifying military engagements referenced in the law to include the most recent engagements, Operation Freedom's Sentinel and Operation Inherent Resolve.

Several years have passed since the enactment of the law and no scholarships have been awarded in the intervening years. Accordingly, in the case of a spouse or other eligible dependent, the bill increases the eligibility period for a Military Dependents Scholarship from 15 years to 21 years from the date of death of the person, the date the person is officially listed as "Missing in Action," or the date upon which the person is certified to have been totally and permanently disabled for initial receipt of the program's benefits.

Operation Noble Eagle officially began on September 12, 2001, and is the name given to military operations to support homeland security and support federal, State, and local agencies in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Operation Enduring Freedom, the official name for the Global War on Terrorism, began in October 2001. This operation primarily refers to the War in Afghanistan, although additional missions are included in the operation. Operation Enduring Freedom was completed in 2014. Subsequent operations in Afghanistan by the United States military were completed under the official name Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Operation Freedom's Sentinel was a coalition mission to train, advise, and assist Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and to conduct counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al Qaeda.

Operation Iraqi Freedom began in 2003 with the invasion of Iraq by a United States led coalition which overthrew the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein, and continued through 2011 as the coalition forces fought an insurgency in Iraq. Operation Inherent Resolve, begun in 2014, is the name given to United States military and coalition forces united to support the Iraqi Security Force operations and to complete military campaigns in Iraq, Syria, and Libya.