

South Carolina House of Representatives
Government Efficiency and Legislative Oversight Committee

Written Testimony on South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department: July 30, 2026

Disability Rights South Carolina (DRSC) is the Protection and Advocacy agency for South Carolina and has been the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for people with disabilities in South Carolina since 2017. As the CAP, DRSC receives and addresses client concerns about getting vocational rehabilitation services. The CAP works to advise, assist, and advocate for individuals who want to receive effective vocational rehabilitation services from our state vocational rehabilitation agencies. DRSC appreciates the opportunity to share our observations and highlight our concerns about the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (VR). We submitted written testimony to this committee last year, but our testimony now is focused on postsecondary education services for people with disabilities and the bureaucratic red tape they face in achieving their employment goals.

Bureaucratic red tape for post-secondary education:

Importance of Post-Secondary Training

Post-secondary training is an important vocational rehabilitation service for individuals with disabilities who are working to reach or advance in their employment goals.

Barriers Reported to DRSC

Many individuals have contacted DRSC about VR's reluctance to provide services that support post-secondary education. These barriers arise across a range of programs, including bachelor's and master's degrees, certificate programs, technical college degrees, and other post-secondary pathways.

Rigid Procedures and Documentation Requirements

People seeking post-secondary education face overly-rigid VR procedures that create unnecessary obstacles, causing frustration and jeopardizing their educational progress. These complexities can deny access to needed support and conflict with VR regulations that call for flexibility and exceptions in individual cases.

For example, VR requires students to provide documentation such as course registration, syllabi, and book and materials supply lists that may not be available from the school until after the payment deadline. When VR refuses to pay tuition until all such documentation is

received, students are left with uncertainty and potential personal liability. VR's strict and unwavering demands before paying or promising payment of tuition make the current process unworkable.

Financial Support and Student Loan Burdens

VR now recognizes that student loans should not be counted as part of a student's financial contribution toward education. However, the agency at times denies or fails to timely confirm full financial support, compelling students to take out student loans—debt they are unlikely to be able to repay.

Longstanding Procedural Problems

DRSC has attempted to address these procedural problems for several years, but VR has failed to adapt to the realities of school schedules. The agency continues to rely on procurement policies that take time to complete and, as a result, does not agree to reimburse students for course supplies or equipment they had to purchase on their own in order to begin work on the first day of class.

Impact on Students

Students have had to withdraw from classes when VR payment was not confirmed before the tuition payment deadline, even after classes had begun. VR's impracticable documentation requirements, delays in service delivery, and inflexible bureaucratic procedures frustrate people with disabilities and deter them from pursuing assistance for education needed to reach their employment goals. As a result of these constant struggles, many students ultimately give up on seeking help from VR for their post-secondary education.

Request to Committee Members

DRSC asks committee members to review VR documentation requirements, to question delays in service delivery, and to review procedures that create bureaucratic red tape for individuals and work with VR to establish a better process to encourage successful post-secondary education and employment for individuals who are seeking help.

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