



**Joint Written Testimony of  
The Honorable Tim S. McClain  
Chairman, Board of Directors  
and  
Mr. James Lorraine  
President & CEO  
America's Warrior Partnership  
Augusta, GA**

**Before the  
Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs**

**May 22, 2018**

**Testimony in Support of:**

- **S. 318 To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish medically necessary transportation for newborn children of certain women veterans.”**
- **S. 514 To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the benefits and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to women veterans, and for other purposes.**
- **S. 524 To establish the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs and for other purposes.**
- **S. 711 To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for mental health services from the Department of Veterans Affairs to include members of the reserve components for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.**
- **S. 785 Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019**
- **S. 805 Veterans Debt Fairness Act of 2019**
- **S. 850 Highly Rural Veteran Transportation Program Extension Act**
- **S. 857 A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the amount of special pension for Medal of Honor recipients, and for other purposes.**
- **S. 980 Homeless Veterans Prevention Act of 2019**
- **A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to pay educational assistance or subsistence allowances to eligible persons when educational institutions are temporarily closed, and for other purposes.**

Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Tester, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on several pieces of proposed legislation that offer the potential to have a tremendous impact on our nation's veterans. I am Tim McClain and have had the honor of serving our country on active duty for more than 20 years as a Navy Surface

Warfare Officer and JAG Corps Officer, and the privilege of serving as a former General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

I am currently the Chairman of the Board of Directors of America's Warrior Partnership, a nonprofit organization serving veterans and their families. Our mission at America's Warrior Partnership is to empower communities to empower veterans. Our approach to the mission takes many forms, but it starts with connecting community organizations with local veterans to understand their unique needs and situations. After gaining this knowledge, we connect local veteran-serving organizations with the appropriate resources, services, and partners that the veteran requires. Our ultimate goal is to create a better quality of life for all veterans.

Our Community Integration model provides the framework for organizations to conduct proactive outreach to veterans and holistically serve all of their needs. We have seen incredible results from this model, which has established relationships with more than 48,000 veterans since February 2014 in our eight Affiliate Communities across the country. Proactive outreach is having a tremendous impact on these veterans. More than 90% of our veterans self-report that America's Warrior Partnership's proactive engagement and support give them a greater level of overall satisfaction, and they believe their community cares about their well-being. America's Warrior Partnership's Community Integration model works.

Providing testimony with me today is the president and CEO of America's Warrior Partnership, Mr. Jim Lorraine, who is also a veteran of our great country having served for 22 years as an Air Force Officer and Flight Nurse. Before founding America's Warrior Partnership, Mr. Lorraine served as the founding director of the United States Special Operations Command Care Coalition, a wounded warrior advocacy organization recognized as the gold standard in supporting more than 4,000 special operations force wounded, ill, or injured and their families. He has also served as Special Assistant for Warrior and Family Support to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, during which time he transformed the Chairman's "Sea of Goodwill" concept into a strategy. Mr. Lorraine will provide America's Warrior Partnership's testimony regarding four pieces of proposed legislation.

Thank you, Mr. McClain. In my testimony today, I will address a number of the draft legislative proposals related to our work at America's Warrior Partnership. As an organization that has developed, operated, and replicated community-based veteran serving programs throughout the nation we recognize the positive impact a community integration approach has on the hopefulness and improved quality of life for the veterans, their families, and their communities. To help frame our testimony related to the legislation you are considering I would like to share what we've learned from veterans across the country. Every month we measure the services being sought and successfully provided to over 48,000 veterans across the nation additionally, through our annual survey of the same population we correlate the holistic services they are seeking with their level of hopefulness or hopelessness. We've learned that 49.7% of veterans surveyed are seeking greater opportunities for recreation or sports, 45% are seeking networking with other veterans, and 35% are seeking volunteer opportunities. Additionally, access to Veterans Affairs benefits and better employment opportunities round out the top 5 opportunities that veterans are seeking.

When looking at the veteran's level of hope our research indicates that 56% of veterans are very hopeful or what we call "thriving", with 32% hopeful or what we call "in transition", and 13% of

veterans as hopeless or “stuck.” This 13% is consistent across our communities regarding the percentage of veterans who are seeking critical life services. In our research, we correlate the veterans level of hope with the services they are seeking. Those that are thriving are seeking networking with other veterans, better employment, and improved education. Those in transition are seeking short term financial assistance, legal support, and housing. While those veterans who are struggling are seeking access to transportation, short-term financial assistance, spiritual support and legal assistance. To summarize our research, those who have access to transportation are 22% more hopeful than those who do not. Those veterans with self-sustained housing are 13% more hopeful than those who do not have stable housing. Those veterans with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher are 10% more hopeful than those without a college degree. And those with access to healthcare (86.4% of veterans surveyed have health insurance) are 13% more hopeful than those without health insurance.

I provide this information to the committee to frame America’s Warrior Partnership’s support of legislation that builds stronger more collaborative communities around veteran employment as captured in S. 785 but would suggest we look beyond encouraging community-based collaboration around a single issue and rather focus on holistically improving veterans hope and quality of life. We strongly support legislation that builds on a plan to improve the quality of life for all veterans and their families through alternative care, recreational therapy, and engagement outside of the Veterans Affairs services.

We feel that changing the eligibility criteria for Veterans Affairs care for Dishonorable and Other Than Honorable as written in S. 785, Section 104 would help those with this characterization of discharge, but should be re-thought due to the fact that millions of honorably discharged veterans who served without adverse impact are not eligible for Veteran’s Affairs care and should be first for eligibility modification.

While we agree with the services outlined in S. 785, Section 102 for transition services we feel that without corporate and educational institutions acknowledging the skills acquired within the military the services that are outlined do not fully meet the transition needs of the veterans.

Lastly, we completely support both the S. 857 A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the amount of special pension for Medal of Honor recipients, and for other purposes and a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to pay educational assistance or subsistence allowances to eligible persons when educational institutions are temporarily closed, and for other purposes. It is vital that we support those we recognize as providing the greatest sacrifice to our nation. We also must recognize that those using their GI Bill must have the stability of income during the most trying periods of natural disaster or government shut-down that are beyond their control or ability to plan.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on these critical areas and will now let Mr. McClain conclude our testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Lorraine. Chairman Isakson, thank you for inviting us to provide testimony today. We are both honored and pleased to have this opportunity. Our mission is the same as the mission of this committee: to ensure that all veterans are taken care of and provided the benefits that they have rightfully earned through their service to our country. There is much work to be done, and we look

forward to continuing collaborating with the Department of Veterans Affairs and our partners across the country to empower veterans from all walks of life as they transition to civilian life. Thank you again for the invitation to share our testimony today.