



RESURRECTING LIVES FOUNDATION

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Testimony by
Paul Worley, Executive Director
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Good afternoon, Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Reece, Representative Rogers, Representative Green and Representative Patton. I am Paul Worley, the Executive Director for the Resurrecting Lives Foundation. I am here to introduce you to the Foundation and its mission, and to ask for funding to help us conduct a critical employment project that will benefit our military Veterans, their families and our state.

I was born and raised in Peebles, Ohio. In June 2004, I entered active duty service in the US Army and started my career as an Infantry Officer. During my time in the Army, I held numerous leadership positions from platoon leader to company commander. I served three tours of duty in support of the Global War on Terror—two in Iraq and one in Afghanistan.

The obligation to serve does not end when you take off the uniform, so after my military service was complete, I decided to return home and run for public office. In 2012, I was elected as an Adams County Commissioner and faithfully served the people of my county for four years.

In 2017, my desire to continue to serve others brought me to the Resurrecting Lives Foundation, which is a 501(c) 3 non-profit authorized by the IRS on July 28, 2012. Our mission is narrow and deep - we assist in the recovery and reintegration of our Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans who sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury, TBI, as a result of their service to our nation. We act as an organizing force for collaboration with the military, the Veterans Administration, and the civilian world to promote health care, employment, and education. In Ohio alone, there are nearly 15,000 of these heroes.

The scope of the TBI epidemic is far reaching, not only affecting the Veteran, but also the family, the community, and the state. The medical conditions associated with untreated Traumatic Brain Injuries are many and include substance abuse, unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, and even suicide. The costs to the community are great, and are measured in millions of dollars and, even more importantly, in many lives lost in the struggle to recover from TBI. All of our voluntary military members have sacrificed for our futures. We have an obligation to take care of those who fought and served our nation.

Our solution is simple in theory: grant employment opportunities to our military members prior to military separation, and guarantee that our heroes and their families will have a plan prior to separation. This initiative will require the collaboration of the Department of Defense, Veterans Administration, Veterans Service Organizations, and the civilian corporate world. We have that plan in place, but we require funding for execution of this initiative.

RLF has formed our first employment initiative pilot program with the DOD at the Fort Belvoir Intrepid Center. This is an effort to put boots on the ground, so to speak, by aiding the transition of TBI-affected service members into civilian life and civilian employment. This program would also include Veterans already living in Ohio that are unemployed or underemployed.

This program is the first of its kind anywhere in the United States. Ohio has the opportunity to be the gold standard when it comes to reintegrating our Veterans back into the workforce. It will be a one-year program of data collection and will then be modified as necessary and marketed to the remaining eight Intrepid Centers, VA and DOD.

We are initiating this pilot program in April 2017. Starting in January 2018, we will be following 100 transitioning service members for one year regarding any employment concerns. From the first group of 100, we plan on serving at minimum 35 Veterans and their families that are either living in Ohio or will be relocating to Ohio for employment.

An assessment of this program funded by the University of Southern California is already secured and ready to begin employment follow-up. After the initial pilot program, this initiative will be marketed to Fortune 500 companies in the United States as a means of creating a qualified, dedicated, diversified and trained workforce of Veterans. However, to effectively conduct

this employment initiative and enlist the support of large employers throughout the state, RLF needs additional help.

The funding we request today will be utilized for a medical testing, establishing aptitude and ability for employment, medical record transfers for continuity of care, and ongoing communication with our soldiers via iPad and Telehealth so that we may act swiftly to prevent the complications of substance abuse, unemployment, and so forth. These complications of TBI are very costly for the community, so the investment of an iPad and the continued communication to prevent these issues is miniscule in comparison to the costs of treatment or incarceration. The employers, therefore, will not be responsible for their war wounds, but will be able to grant health care benefits for all non-service connected issues as well as family members.

This is a very important step forward for Veteran reintegration, and is a concept to prevent the complications, and save taxpayer dollars through several means. First of all, the community will not be paying for rehab or even incarceration, which is costly. Secondly, the Veteran will immediately begin a new and productive civilian life where earning power will grow with employment, and goals for a future will be realized, not just for the Veteran, but also for the family. It is a win/win for the Veteran and the community, and a few dollars spent on the front end will save thousands on the back end.

We know, instinctively, that this will be successful. This type of employment program will save each community and stop up to millions in future disability payments, custodial care issues, and lost income. We are intending for this program to become the gold standard for the nation, and to assist with the military separation process in a very positive way.

We are very proud of this initiative to help our Veterans. We must, however, seek funding for the technology, tools and services that are imperative to make this successful. Now is the time to make sure that Ohio is delivering on the solemn promise made to our veterans for their voluntary service. In the military we have a saying, "No one gets left behind." It is our duty to our warriors and their families that we do not leave them behind after their service is over.

Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Reece, and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to let you know about the important work of the Resurrecting Lives Foundation. Resurrect a hero—Strengthen Ohio.