

NATIONAL VETERANS MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM

HONOR ★ CONNECT ★ INSPIRE ★ EDUCATE

Dear Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is LTG. (RET) Michael Ferriter, CEO of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum (NVMM). I am a 35-year Veteran of the United States Army in which I served in a number of capacities. During my time in military leadership, I completed three combat tours as a general officer and served as lead military advisor to the Iraqi government from 2008-2010. In my final role in the U.S. Army, I served as Commanding General, Installation Management Command. In this role, I oversaw the operations of 75 global Army bases with 75,000 employees and an annual operating budget of \$12 billion. Beyond streamlining Army operations and efficiencies, this role allowed me to focus on providing necessary tools to support our soldier's holistic wellness, including addressing issues related to mental health challenges and transitions to civilian life.

I would like to discuss ways you can help Veterans and our greater community by investing in the NVMM CARES program.

The National Veterans Memorial and Museum located right here in downtown Columbus is the vision of the late Senator John Glenn and opened in October 2018. Prior to opening, Congress designated us a national museum making NVMM the first and only national Veterans museum and memorial committed to honoring and educating on behalf of all Veterans from all eras and all branches of service. Since our opening, our team has grown from a museum engaging our local community through field trips and in-person programming to also serving Veterans with a commitment to addressing the needs of those who have selflessly served our great nation and community.

Through our platform as a national institution, and with the leadership and support of Ohio's leading corporations, the Museum is uniquely positioned to address the VA's jarring statistic of 22 Veterans per day commit suicide. The NVMM CARES program address the often-intertwined challenges of mental health and under or unemployment, which can amplify suicide ideation amongst the Veteran community. NVMM CARES allows the Museum to address the Five Social Detriments of Health (Economic Stability, Health Care Access and Quality, Social and Community Context, Education Access and Quality, and Neighborhood and Built Environment), while also building trust between Veterans and our civilian communities by removing barriers preventing Veterans from receiving supportive services.

The Museum's Resilience and Wellness programming specifically connects Veterans and civilians through activities that are academically proven to reduce the negative side effects of mental health challenges. Currently, we host six weekly classes in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, two weekly yoga classes, and quarterly art classes. These complimentary programs directly impact lives by providing proven supportive activities while also allowing civilians the opportunity to engage and learn from Veterans in an empowering space.

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Our Veteran Concierge program addresses the epidemic of Veteran under and unemployment. As of April 2022, over 260,000 Veterans were seeking civilian employment, while those Veterans who are employed are 16% more likely than non-Veterans to be underemployed. As a national Museum, the NVMM has direct access to corporations, Veterans, and transitioning military personnel on a local and national level. This platform has allowed us to connect Veteran job seekers and corporate HR teams with tools designed to streamline and simplify the process of placing qualified Veterans in skilled positions providing a thriving wage and impactful benefits.

Additionally, our team is reducing the costly turnover of Veteran employees by supporting corporate partners in the creation of and growth of Veteran Employee Resource Groups. With 44% of Veterans leaving their first post-military job within one year, and 74% leaving within two years, it is crucial for workplaces to provide retention and support services directed towards Veterans. We know when Veterans are embraced by their employer and connected to other Veterans and allies, they are more likely to stay and grow with an organization.

We are asking for your consideration to establish the Creating, Advancing, Resilience, Employment and Stability (CARES) Veteran Support Program line item at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The investment of up to \$500,000 each fiscal year would help us continue our programming.

Thank you for your consideration of investment in the NVMM CARES program so that we can continue to provide these services and more, free of charge. I invite you to visit the Museum for a tour and to have more in-depth conversation on the impact of our work to connect Veterans with the needed tools to thrive post-service.

LT. GENERAL MICHAEL FERRITER

U.S. Army (Retired)

President and CEO
Office: 614.427.1027
Mobile: 757.390.7387
Website: NationalVMM.org

Executive Assistant:

Ms. Jennifer Tracy
Office: 380.242.2713
Email: JTracy@NationalVMM.org