

# NATIONAL VETERANS MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM

HONOR ★ CONNECT ★ INSPIRE ★ EDUCATE

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

My name is Colonel Bill Butler, U.S. Army (Retired), Chief of Staff of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. I am a 27-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 to Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, I have served in roles as Deputy Commandant of the U.S. Army Infantry School and the Director of Operations for U.S. Army Cadet Command. After my retirement from the Army, I also served as a senior Department of the Army civilian at U.S. Army Africa in Vicenza, Italy. I have been with the NVMM since 2019 supporting overall organizational operations with a specific focus on leading our Resilience and Wellness programming and outreach to Veteran Service Organizations locally, at the state level, and nationally.

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 jarring statistic of 22 Veterans per day committing suicide. The NVMM CARES program addresses 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 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 toward 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 am inviting you to visit the Museum for a tour and more in-depth conversation on the impact of our work to connect Veterans with the needed tools to thrive post-service. I would be happy to take any questions about the Museum and our impact.