

# NATIONAL VETERANS MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM

HONOR ★ CONNECT ★ INSPIRE ★ EDUCATE

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Dear Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Finance, Health and Human Service Subcommittee,

My name is LTG. (RET) Michael Ferriter, CEO of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. 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'm here today to discuss ways you can help Veterans and our greater community by investing 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.

As a 501 c (3) we operate on an annual budget which is met through fundraising and earned revenue. Though the Museum was founded with support from both Federal and state government, we receive minimal public funding. In 2023 we will receive our first federal grant money which is committed to supporting scholarships for non-degree holding Veterans who participate in our LCERT program at the Ohio State University John Glenn College of Public Affairs. To this point in our history, we have not received any funding from the state of Ohio.

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 who 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 Determinants 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 civilians communities by removing barriers preventing Veterans from receiving supportive services.

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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 challenge. Currently, we host six weekly classes in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, two weekly yoga classes, and quarter art classes. These complimentary programs directly impact lives by providing proven supportive activities while allowing civilians the opportunity to engage and learn from Veterans in an empowering space.

Our Veteran Concierge program address the epidemic of Veteran and 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 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 Veterans 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 in one year, and 74% leaving within in two years, it is crucial for workplaces to provide retention and supportive 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 accomplish our work by connecting with Veterans across Ohio and nationwide by maintaining strong connections with our military, Veteran employees of corporate partners, and the forming of strong partnerships with Veteran resources. The Museum is specifically connected with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, with representation in all states, and the National Association of County Veteran Service Organizations, which supports Veterans in over 500 counties nationwide.

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 visit the Museum for a tour and more-in-depth conversation on the impact of our work to connect Veterans with the needed tools thrive post-service. I would be happy to take any questions about the Museum and our impact.