

House Veterans and Military Development Committee

Wednesday, May 21st

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Proponent SB 39

Good morning and thank you to Chairman Richardson, Vice-Chair Mathews, Ranking minority member Hall and the rest of this committee for taking time to listen to our thoughts about Senate Bill 39. A special thank you goes to Chairwoman Richardson for holding this hearing on a day when our United Steelworker brothers and Sisters can join us.

My name is Bobbie Trolio. I am the current Veterans of steel representative for local 2737 and I also a US Army Veteran, I served from 1994 till 2002. I served in both wartime efforts and peace time in Bosnia and I served wartime efforts in Afghanistan.

The great state of Ohio currently has over 730,000 veterans living here. Over 500,000 of those veterans served during one or more wartime campaigns, but unfortunately we have lost so many to suicide. As of 2021 the count was 242, and while that might not seem like a high number any loss of a Veteran should sound alarm bells. That's 242 Mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, wives and husbands to our very own fellow Ohioans.

As a veteran who served in wartime campaign I am here to tell you about my personal experience in leaving the Army and not knowing what was available to me as a veteran. When I left Afghanistan in May of 2002, I returned to Ft. Campbell to start to process out of the Army. Due to my extensive deployment times I had over three months of leave time to use before my separation date. I literally had two weeks to clear base, the Army and start my leave time. While the Army does offer some help when ETS-ing the Army I was unable to get any one on one training or help with transitioning to civilian life. I didn't even know how to write a resume. I got to have one medical exam with the VA on base. I was handed a bunch of paperwork to read and that's about all. I had no idea how the VA worked or really what the VA was actually about. I wasn't even told that there was

counseling available to me to help me coming from an active war zone, to help me process the horrible things I had seen and been through. I don't regret anything about my service in the Army and I would do it all again. I have a great sense of pride for my service. Until the United Steelworks adopted the Veterans of Steel program I was still very much in the dark on what was available to me and my family. It wasn't until I attended a meeting with US Senator Sherrod Brown about the PACT ACT of 2022. Our local Veterans affairs representative was also at the meeting and I got to have a one on one conversation after this meeting with someone who asked me some questions. I was able to set-up a meeting and get information I needed, and I have since been able to get a medical exam and that led to the start of my VA benefits. That's 20 plus years of benefits I was actually entitled to, but had no clue it was even a thing or that it was available to me and I know I am not alone.

That's why I am here today! Had I had this information available to me at my place of work I would have known about these programs. I wouldn't have been sitting in the dark not knowing what my service had entitled me to. This simple but yet so important poster could have made a huge impact in my life, and can you imagine what this simple and easy poster could mean to other veterans?

Those we have lost too soon might have been able to call and use the crisis line, been seen at a medical office and more. Imagine if you will the impact this could have for all Ohioans. I have always said our actions speak volumes as to what we truly mean. This simple action right here would be a huge step forward in the right direction, to show everyone in Ohio and outside of Ohio that we truly mean it when we say we support our Veterans in Ohio and that we truly care about their wellbeing. I would encourage this committee to think long and hard about this simple poster that all workplaces in Ohio should post, but don't have to post. If they say "we support our Ohio veterans" then let's show the whole country that we actually mean it and not just on Veterans Day.

In closing I would like to thank Senators Johnson and Senator Craig for working together in a bipartisan way to get Senate Bill 39 this close to the finish line.

Instead of telling Veterans “Thank you for your service” lets instead say “here’s how we can help you.”

“Never was so much owed by so many to so few” –Winston Churchill

Thank you again to this committee for taking time to hear me out and thank you to the United Steelworkers for asking me to speak today about something we should all care about. I’m open to any questions you may have.