

Catalina Garcia, USMC Veteran
Proponent Testimony (Written)
SB 153 – Ohio Veterans Now Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Program
Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee

My name is Catalina Garcia. I would like to thank Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino and Ranking member Williams for allowing me to submit proponent testimony in support of SB 153.

I am writing today to encourage you to continue to fund the Ohio Veterans Now Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation project.

Here is what led me to the program and how it helped me:

After several months plagued by anxiety and depression, I knew I had to make a change or I was destined for another in-patient stay or worse. My husband had suffered from severe depression for over ten months and the roller coaster of his mood swings had caused me to feel helpless, hopeless, and useless. This created the perfect recipe for my anxiety and depression to take over and thoughts of suicide to creep in. My ability to focus on my work began to suffer which made me feel worse because I used work as a coping mechanism. By the time my husband started pushing me further away, I couldn't stop thinking "what's the point of waiting for it to get better when it always seems to get ripped away from you over and over."

Earlier this year we saw a light at the end of the tunnel when my husband learned about the Ohio Veteran's NOW Program which offered TMS therapy. My first few days in the NOW clinic, I was overwhelmed by the unfamiliar faces as this new journey I was about to start. Veteran Peer/Patients assisted wherever they could whether it was answering questions or introducing new Veteran Peer/Patients to the medical staff. I observed the unofficial motto "Veterans helping Veterans," which was a core value of what made this program work so well. After my third baseline Electroencephalogram (EEG) [recording of brain activity], the presiding physician, Dr. Marcie Bockbrader came over and showed me how she was able to see how anxious I was. I was mind-blown (pun intended); she was able to see my invisible wounds!

I have now completed 10 of the expected 30 treatments and I am happy to report my depression is significantly better and even though my anxiety is still present, I feel more productive and functional. I am grateful to the well-rounded wellness plan of care, which includes consultation(s) with a physician, social worker, psychiatrist, fitness trainer, and nutritionist. I am working hard to make the new routines permanent by eating healthier and participating in the Exercise is Medicine program too. My husband is nearly done with his sessions and he is feeling significantly better too. I have even heard him say more than once, "this saved his life and probably our marriage." Bottom line, we are both improving for ourselves first and for each other.