

**Proponent Testimony of  
Sergeant Jeff Lindquist, USMC (Ret.)  
before the Ohio Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee  
in support of SB 153**

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams & members of the Ohio Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 153.

My name is Jeff Lindquist, and I am a retired United State Marine having served from 1999-2006

While deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) my Squadron lost 4 US & 8 British Royal Marines in a helicopter crash on 21 Mar 2003 suffering the first US casualties of what became the longest war in US history.

I was given the honor of escorting my brothers SSgt. Kendall Waters-Bey & Cpl. Brian Kennedy back to the United States.

While there, I received additional orders to transport SSgt Waters-Bey and his personal belongings to his family in Baltimore.

There, I stood casket detail/watch for the public viewing, wake service, performed Marine Corps funeral & military honors detail services, and presented the United States flag to SSgt's 10-year-old son Kenneth.

In addition to the above, I had a significant history of back issues leading to multiple procedures and surgeries. Eventually these issues lead to a medical retirement from the Marine Corps.

At first, I was able to emotionally block this event by keeping myself so occupied that I did not have time to think about what truly had happened or how I felt.

However, as time went on and my kids began to reach Kenneth's age, I felt an overwhelming sense of guilt and sadness for reasons I did not understand, and I turned to opioids and alcohol to cope.

Opioids are not simply effective at deadening physical pain; they also deaden psychological & emotional pain. And I had a prescription ... a get out of jail free card that allowed me to take 2 pills every 4 hours without judgement from others ... after all that's why I was retired at 30 years old.

At first, I was prescribed a modest 3 Hydrocodone pills a day and over the next five years, that number grew to 8 to 10 Hydrocodone pills a day + 2 OxyContin (1 a.m. & 1 p.m.) – all prescribed.

At one point I was taking roughly 20 prescribed medications a day and it became a full-time job just to track my medications and show-up to all my medical appointments.

In addition to numerous psychological, pain, and sleep medications, I began self-medicating with alcohol and other drugs.

This cycle often leads to the trifecta destroying our community - isolation, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts.

Fortunately for me, I had a solid support system led by my wife, children, and blood/Marine Corps family members. Not many who put their loved ones and friends through this process can say they have this support; I was and am still truly blessed.

My old flight surgeon had recently come across an innovative technology that was claiming to help individuals with cognitive issues and sleep. They were recruiting a cohort of veterans to see if a technology called Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation or TMS would help with PTSD.

Doc began calling Marines he served with to see who could use this treatment and I was chosen. He asked if I would give the treatment a try and made me promise to show up the next morning (Saturday – open just for me).

I reluctantly showed up for treatment not expecting much as I had been through many programs over the years. However, I had made a promise to Doc – veteran-to-veteran/brother-to-brother – that I would follow through and I didn't want to let him down. After all, he had gone out of his way to track me down and ask me to investigate this treatment. Someone needed to see if it worked, and he put his trust in me to accomplish the task. This mission was not just for me, because this treatment had the potential to help many other veterans in the future.

When I showed up to the clinic, I was greeted by an Army veteran who had experienced success with the TMS program himself. This veteran-to-veteran connection gave a sense of assurance that this was going to be alright and worth the effort because he wouldn't steer me down a path that would lead to damaging his reputation and integrity with other veterans.

After having an electroencephalogram (EEG) placed on my head for a few minutes, I met with the lead doctor. He asked me to take a seat while saying, "You must be exhausted." Then he began rattling off a list of issues he believed that I struggled to manage, with incredible accuracy. Keep in mind that I had not shared any personal information with him yet. I asked him how he knew this, and he said, "I can see it in your EEG and I can help you."

At that moment I felt overwhelmed with emotion and burst into tears. Over time, I had lost hope but, in that moment, I was crying because someone had validated that I was not crazy. I did in fact have a problem that could be identified and could not be fixed through traditional means of manning up or simply changing my thoughts.

After pulling myself together the doctor took me into the TMS room to get my first treatment.

That evening they asked me to lay down when I felt tired. Usually, as nighttime came my body was exhausted, but my mind would begin to race.

Except this time, I fell asleep and I hadn't slept that long or soundly in years.

After a couple more days of continued improved sleep, behavior, and attitude, my wife decided to go with me to the appointment. She thanked them for giving her husband back. It had been many years since she had seen the man that she fell in love with and married and was extremely thankful.

This happens often and is one of the most fulfilling parts of this treatment. The "side effects" of the TMS treatment on the family unit and friends is profound and truly cannot be quantified in simple terms.

After three weeks, I had voluntarily reduced my opiates to 1 Oxy and 1 Norco without major withdrawal effects. This is not normal for someone taking this level of opiates. It seems that TMS treatment creates a "soft landing" when reducing opioids.

In fact, I was able to completely stop taking the medication for many months before reinjuring my back significantly enough to need major reconstructive surgery. I was given a bottle of opioids and other medication. However, this time I was able to manage the pain much better following the TMS treatment. I was able to maintain a low enough dosage that I would not be in harm of slipping back into where I was previously.

I will never go back to utilizing opioid medication to suppress psychological & emotional pain.

TMS gave me my life back and it gave me a new mission and purpose. After going through the program, I knew what I wanted to do — I want to help veterans and others overcome the struggles I had overcome.

Roughly 3 years ago an article in the [Columbus Dispatch reported a recent study by OSU titled the "Price Tag of Ohio's Opioid Epidemic"](#). The study found the opioid epidemic cost the state of Ohio between \$6.6 to \$8.8 billion a year; approximately equal to the same amount the state spends annually on K-12 education (Candisky 2017).

We were losing the battle before COVID and it is more important now than ever, that we take a proactive approach in our treatment of mental health and addiction.

The current COVID pandemic is having a profound impact on the population. Multiple researchers have identified social isolation, marital discord, unemployment and financial distress, anxiety, and over all uncertainty as factors that can increase suicide risk. All these factors have exponentially increase over the last 13 months and many people are turning to substances to cope. The uncertainty of the moment adds to the chaotic mind and invites more restless sleep.

According to a [September 2020 CBS News article, military suicides have increased by as much as 20% during the coronavirus pandemic](#) and senior Army leaders report they have seen approximately a 30% jump in active-duty suicides so far this year. This increase comes on the

heels of [2019, which reached the highest level since the Pentagon first began closely monitoring self-inflicted deaths in 2000.](#)

Compounding these problems are the first responders and front-line medical workers who are dealing with their own unique stresses during the current unrest and have dealt with the death caused by COVID.

Further complicating matters was the fact that mental health and addiction treatment facilities struggled to find traction with the ever-evolving regulatory COVID restrictions placed on healthcare systems.

I founded TEAM Argonaut, because American veterans who have served their country do not deserve to struggle and/or die alone when we have innovative technologies available to help manage these issues. I know firsthand what this form of TMS can do, and I plan on helping as many people as possible.

Like many of my fellow veterans we feel the guilt of being spared by forces we can't understand. We can't change the past, but we can change the future. I urge your continued support of this TMS program so that the veterans, law enforcement, and first responders who have selflessly taken care of us in our time of need, can be offered the greatest gift we can give ... restored hope for a more meaningful future.

Semper Fi,

Jeff Lindquist, MBA MAEd

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