

Testimony of Benjamin Fitzgerald  
before the  
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
"The State of VA Services in Ohio"  
Field Hearing, Columbus, Ohio  
November 21, 2017

I truly appreciate Senator Brown for inviting me to talk on behalf of veterans, like myself, about topics of discussion concerning Veteran Affairs. Today I want to highlight some of the questions and concerns that I have heard while working as a VA Work/Study at Cuyahoga Community College, and through Team RWB Cleveland, Akron, and Columbus Chapters. One of the biggest concerns is the transition from military to civilian lifestyle. When processing out there is so much on your mind, and there are only a few hours that you have learning about benefits, and addressing concerns, during this transition. It can become quite confusing, stressful, and exciting all at the same time. Knowing this, when we return home, you forget what was available to you...and it happens very easily. I will say however, that Team RWB, a nonprofit veterans organization, whose mission is to enrich the lives of Veterans through Exercise, Volunteer work, and social interaction, has been the greatest thing I have the pleasure to be a part of since coming out of service 9 years ago. I joined the Cleveland Team about a year and a half ago now, and I've never felt more at home. The Team greeted me with open arms, and as fellow veterans, that comradery and sense of understanding made me feel at home. What's even better, is the team consist of civilian members as well, and with their help, we are

able to bridge that gap between those who serve, have served, and the civilian population. The problem is, I didn't even know about Team RWB until 7.5 years after I had already got out. In fact, other than the GI Bill, which we appreciate Senator Brown making the Forever GI Bill, I had no idea so much was available for veterans and their families. Next, and quickly, I want to see if there is a solution where our medical records aren't taking up to a year to get from our perspective Regional Center's?

Though there are more questions and concerns, which I hope will be brought up, I truly appreciate your time, and allowing me to speak on behalf of my brothers, sisters, and myself.

Thank you!