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The International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Testimony before the

Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

On "Veterans' Employment: Improving the Transition from the Battlefield to the Workforce"

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Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and distinguished Members of the committee, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters welcomes the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on "Veterans' Employment: Improving the Transition from Battlefield to the Workforce."

My name is Mike Yauger. I serve in the capacity of International Coordinator for the Teamsters Helmets to Hardhats program and the Teamsters Heroes to Health Care program. As a younger man I had the honor and the privilege of serving in America's military as an Army Ranger. In the course of that duty I learned firsthand some very important lessons about life. My service taught me the meaning of honor, duty and commitment. These values form the very foundation upon which Teamsters programs are built.

For the past six years, the Teamsters have been leaders in actively identifying and developing programs to assist our veterans in transitioning their military skills into the civilian sector. A veteran who receives military training for class 8 vehicles receives a military license and is exempt from commercial drivers' license (CDL) requirements imposed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and states. When a veteran is discharged and separates from the military the military license is of no use in the civilian sector. In order to obtain a CDL license the veteran must go through all of the state requirements. This may include another training program, a CDL licensing test, and finding or renting a Class 8 truck to take the road skills test. This is a cumbersome and very costly procedure to impose on someone who is facing numerous challenges transitioning back to civilian life. This effort is complicated by the fact that most of the training our service people receive is not recognized and/or well understood by civilian employers. For example, a service person can drive heavy vehicles along supply lines, in 120 degree heat, while being shot at; yet when they return home, their military driver's licenses and driving experience does not qualify them to receive a civilian commercial driver's license or "CDL".

To solve this particular problem, the Teamsters created the Teamsters / Military CDL Licensing Program. It is important to note that we did not do this in isolation. Rather, we worked in partnership with multiple state agencies and the military school houses to analyze the

differentials between Teamsters training and the military curriculum. The result is a 200 hour course that bridges the gaps between the two. The course is taught by certified Teamster trainers at no cost to the veteran. The program is active in Illinois and is currently being developed in Washington State, Las Vegas, New York, and Northern and Southern California.

The Teamsters/Military Licensing program serves as the model for much of our ongoing efforts in support of our nation's veterans. This means a model of bringing all interested parties together, analyzing the issues, and then solving that problem. While the objective of our programs is to develop and provide gainful career opportunities for our returning sons and daughters, we have encountered many obstacles and impediments to their successful transition. While we have overcome many of these challenges, it has not been easy. In fact, the seemingly logical and straight-forward CDL program was three years in the making. During this process, we realized that our military must overcome certain inherent impediments and must serve as a strong ally in breaking down the barriers that currently inhibit a veteran's transition back to civilian life – this means jobs.

Additionally, assisting this transition would be significantly more successful if there were an avenue to provide employers with verifiable proof of a veteran's training and experience acquired while serving in the military. Employers base their hiring decisions upon verification of work history, educational degrees and state or industry recognized certifications. Military experience is not well understood by civilian employers, nor does it equate to civilian certifications. Our experience has taught us that if the military as a whole would work with civilian certifying entities to provide courses that attest to their level of education and qualifications while serving, this would go a long way towards enhancing employers' understanding and embracing of military training and experience. This, in turn, would encourage employers to increasingly recruit and hire veterans.

Another example of an innovative program to employ veterans is the National Building and Construction Trades Helmets to Hardhats program. The Teamsters are active supporting partners to the program and have assisted in placement of over forty thousand veterans in the construction trades over the past five years. Through interaction with veterans over the past five years, we have discovered and identified gaps in the transition process not specific to only the Construction industry. We have interviewed veteran candidates from across the country and understand that many of the challenges they are faced with in transitioning their military skills into the civilian sector.

Two primary challenges exist within every industry that stems from identifying educational/training and job experience requirements for each career pathway. For employers this includes identifying pathways to vocational transition for maintaining and building a high performance workforce. For the military, the challenges include supporting their returning veterans who not only are successful soldiers, but to also be successful in civilian life. Again, this means jobs.

The answer to both of these challenges is to create an engine for partnership among the military, labor and employers, the educational/training community, state certifying agencies and the veterans themselves. We must work together to identify and create a framework for expediting training, licensing and certification based on qualifying service related training and experience. Our country has an obligation to assist veterans in attaining the certification they

need to achieve employment. This includes creating a methodology for connecting them to employers and industry experts once they return from service. This will reduce the number of returning veterans who use their GI Bill dollars on training and education in areas in which there will be no jobs

Another example of an innovative veteran's employment program in which the Teamsters have had a pivotal role is within the healthcare industry. Teamsters have been partners to developing the Heroes to HealthCare (H2HC) program. H2HC is a collaborative effort comprised of representatives from service branches, federal, state and local governments, hospitals and health care sector employers, private sector leaders, union organizations and their affiliates, nonprofits and academia. The primary goal of H2HC is to create the framework for expedited training, licensing and employment of veterans who possess qualified service related training in the healthcare professions. Unfortunately, it is common for a veteran who provided life saving skills on the battlefield to be offered no more than the position of an orderly in civilian hospitals. Approximately 8,000 medical corpsmen leave military service each year, with most having served at least one tour in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of those transitioning careers are inclusive to EMT's, Lab Technicians and Radiology Technicians, Medical Equipment Repair Specialist and Physician Assistants. H2HC is currently working with regulatory agencies on the federal and individual state levels to design and implement a system of translation of military experience and qualifications into each states certification scheme – such as the model used in creating the CDL licensing program.

One group of veterans deserves this country's special attention: our Wounded Warriors. The Teamsters have worked closely with and have participated in extended outreach to our Wounded Warriors – whether their wounds are visible or not. We have worked with Departments of Employment Security to put resources in place to identify specific tools and specific employers who can work within the confines of their physical and emotional well being while still ensuring the highest quality work result. The Boston Teamsters have developed a campaign that called "IPODS for Wounded Veterans" this campaign has created a stir nationally as the project has raised enough funds to supply wounded warriors in recovery with 117 IPods and growing.

We have partnered with universities to bring training and educational opportunities to veterans in the high growth areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy and smart grid. These are high demand, high growth areas; again, this means jobs.

As taxpayers we have invested over \$125,000 in recruitment, screening, testing and basic training for every man and woman currently serving in our armed forces. Our military provides the members of our armed forces with the finest equipment and the finest education available anywhere in the world. Yet upon the honorable completion of their service they are given no documentation or accreditation attesting to the level of their skills. In addition to the sizable initial investment, when the cost of their advanced individual training is added to the equation it should be apparent to all that we have a strategic resource much too valuable to overlook. There was a time when young men and women could count on the military to learn a marketable skill that would serve them well on their road to achieving the American dream. It is now time for our legislators, military and employers to give these fine young men and women who honorably served credit where credit is due. We have defined and been partners to an overall program that

supports all of the identified efforts, Partnership with America (PWA). PWA will work with all of the industry affiliated programs and provide them with the mentorship tools for veterans to excel in whatever industry they would like to transition to as well as educate the industry leaders and human resource administrators with the tools they will need to implement the veteran's skills into their workforce community.

It has been our experience that failure to address these critical issues of successful transition to employment will result in amplifying the incidence of behavioral issues, post traumatic stress disorder and incidences of drugs and alcohol abuse which is the leading factor in the increase of suicides. We have at taxpayers' expense provided the best education with the best technology and equipment in the world. We must partner to provide support to better serve those who have honorably served this great nation.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss our experience in helping veterans to transition to the civilian workforce. We look forward to working with you on this important endeavor.