

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CAROL SEGER, STATE FAMILY PROGRAMS DIRECTOR,  
WASHINGTON ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL CAROL SEGER, STATE FAMILY  
PROGRAMS DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON ARMY NATIONAL GUARD.

Chairman Akaka, Senator Murray, members of the committee and distinguished guests, I am truly honored to be here today and to have this privilege to speak to you on behalf of my fellow Guard Family members, Soldiers, Airmen and Combat Veterans. My name is Lieutenant Colonel Carol Seger and I have served in the National Guard over 28 years. I am currently the State Family Programs Director and I work to assist military Families, which includes our Service members and Veterans, to become self-reliant through education and empowerment. We help our Families by helping the Soldier's/Airman/s transition to civilian life after returning from deployment. We evaluate their circumstances and provide the appropriate information and services. We help our Families regardless of their geographical dispersion or deployment status. Reintegration back into civilian life is complex and it takes time. The entire Family suffers when a Veteran's mental health needs are not acknowledged and resolved; it can strain even the strongest of marriages. PTSD and other mental health conditions are sometimes difficult for Service members to come to grips with. In some cases it can take years for our Combat Veterans to admit they have PTSD - long after their access to medical treatment has expired. After our Veterans acknowledge that they need help, medical professionals must be available to diagnose and treat them. The National Guard has no organic mental health capability for weekend assistance or otherwise. As the number of Combat Veterans continues to grow, so does the need for mental health coverage. Our mental health delivery system must be available for our Veteran's when they realize they need help and ask for it.

The network for Relief and Aid Organizations, Crisis Support, websites for Kids, Self Help websites, medical information, Volunteer Organizations among the commercial, federal, state, non-profit and local services is a huge maze that is difficult to sift through when the Family may already be in crisis. As resources change or improve or disappear, we must be able to provide them with up-to-date resources. Again, we must help them find the right solutions with knowledgeable and experienced assistance.

The National Guard continues to improve providing resources to our Families, Soldiers and Airmen through Reunion and Reintegration Briefings, Family Activity Days, Marriage Retreats and the Transition Assistance Program; but we have more work to do.

One of the ways the National Guard provides assistance to our Families and Combat Veterans is through our Family Assistance Center Coordinators or FACCs. We have eight FACCs in Washington, covering offices in 12 communities that are manned by temporary staff. We must keep this essential link to find the right resources for our Families and Veterans. The need for FACC services is abundantly clear in the number of inquiries they respond to in a month. They range from over 2,600 contacts in a month to over 7,500 in July of this year; which includes support to Youth Camps. Our assistance has helped members of every component and branch except for the Coast Guard. The need for FACC services is growing and we need to ensure this resource for our Combat Veteran's and their Families is available. As for the funding for FACCs; this should not be tied to mobilization; rather, it should be a constant service to be available to

provide assistance to Families, Military members and Combat Veterans. Assistance should not be limited to the first three or six months after they return to their home stations when issues such as PTSD or TBI can take months or years longer to manifest and resolve. And the longer the problem is not treated, the more complicated the treatment becomes due to complications that arise from the lack of treatment. As a result, our Families suffer through crisis on a daily basis.

We should be proud of the progress we've made so far and commit ourselves to the long term for our Veteran's and their Families. More robust medical and mental health services and permanent staffing of our FACCs are needed to help our Combat Veterans and their Families now and in the future. As we look ahead to continued deployments, resources for our Veterans and their Families will need to continue. I encourage everyone here to continue our collaborative efforts and improve the services to care for those who have given so much. Thank you.