



March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014

**Written Testimony Respectfully Submitted to New York City Council Committee on Veterans by  
Avi Leshes, Project Manager for Economic Development at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce in  
Support of S.1707 and A.4098**

Hon. Eric A. Ulrich, Chair  
Hon. Fernando Cabrera, Member  
Hon. Andrew Cohen, Member  
Hon. Alan N. Maisel, Member  
Hon. Paul A. Vallone, Member

Good Morning Chair Ulrich, members of the New York City Council Committee on Veterans and guests.

My name is Avi Leshes and I serve as the Project Manager for Economic Development, at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce (BCC). I stand before you on behalf of Carlo A. Scissura, Esq., President and CEO of BCC in support of S.1707 and A.4098, to establish a veterans tax credit for businesses that hire veterans and disabled veterans.

BCC is a membership based business assistance organization, which represents the interests of over 1,600 member businesses, as well as businesses across the borough of Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Alliance is the not-for-profit economic development organization of the Chamber, which works to address the needs of businesses through direct business assistance programs.

In the proposed resolution calling Governor Cuomo to sign S.1707 and A.4098, it was reported that as of February 2014, the unemployment rate among recent veterans, was 9.2 percent, compared to the general civilian unemployment rate of 6.3 percent. As such the resolution calls for a tax credit of \$3,000 per veteran hired or \$4,000 for every disabled veteran hired.

This proposal would help to create a level playing field for deserving veterans, and at the same time give a much needed boost to job creation in New York. Ultimately, this would have a very positive effect on improving our economy.

In February of this year, BCC started a much needed discussion on veteran needs with the launch of the Brooklyn Chamber Veterans Council. The goal of the council is to create a business and job searching support system that can help make sure veterans get the services they need to grow economically. The core group of participants include representatives from the office of the Brooklyn Borough President; veteran groups Operation Wellness Warrior, David Lynch Foundation, Hope for the Warriors, Team Hevo; as well as Brooklyn Bridge Rotary Club and Small Business Services.

More specifically, the council will focus on building a platform where veterans can go to for assistance pertaining to starting, expanding a business, job placement and career development; working with elected officials to pass legislation that will create procurement opportunities with the city for veteran owned businesses; offering free legal assistance and business advice; and making referrals to mental health specialists and programs.



**Brooklyn Chamber  
of Commerce**

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This is exactly the type of boost that returning veterans need to make a smooth transition to civilian life and this is why BCC respectfully encourages Governor Cuomo to sign S.1707 and A.4098 into law.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to our Veterans, who have risked their lives to protect the freedom of the American people. We as a community should work to provide a strong foundation for them to re-enter their communities and adequate job creation is one of the key steps to making this a reality. We will not only be 'paying it forward', but also encouraging economic development and giving Veterans an opportunity to continue to make valuable contributions within our workforce.



Brooklyn Small Business Development Center  
New York City College of Technology



March 28, 2014

Subject : Testimony of Robert J. Piechota, Director-Brooklyn Small Business Development Center in reference to: - Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign S.1707 and A.4098, legislation establishing a veterans tax credit for businesses that hire veterans and disabled veterans.

Good morning,

“My name is Rob Piechota, and I am the Director of the Brooklyn, Small Business Development Center, (“SBDC”) located in Brooklyn. There are eight NY City Small Business Development Centers throughout all the NY City Boroughs. Previous to my current assignment I served both as the Veterans Assistance and Services Program, (“VASP”) Veteran Advisor across all NY City Boroughs, and I have also served as the Veteran Business Outreach Coordinator, (“VBOC”) for the State of NY. I have over four years working in the greater NY City area with veterans in transition. I am also a Viet Nam era veteran and a West Point graduate.

The SBDCs of the City have counseled well over 300 veterans and their qualified family members over the past twelve months. Many are looking to start or improve their own small businesses. Over half however are not ready yet to begin their own enterprises and thus are looking for a pathway to get experience in the field they need so that they may be better prepared to start their own firms as they become financially healthy and or more proficient in their chosen skill-set. I offer these numbers only to substantiate the fact that my staff and I have a good understanding of the wants, and needs of our veterans of all eras as they explore business opportunities and employment pursuits.

The SBDC works with all types of business owners, not just veterans. 99% of all jobs in NY State are in the Small Business space workforce issues concerning both veterans and no veterans is of paramount importance for us at the SBDC! At the SBDC we understand the unique challenges small business owners face whether starting a business or growing a business. We help small businesses navigate issues such as Procurement challenges, “MWBE” certification hurdles, rising rents and escalating administrative process. However the benefits of doing business in NY State are many. NY City itself is a market place second to none with a special quality of life that attracts so many. The *cost* of doing business in NY is not inexpensive however. Start-up companies that are growing in our incubators and across our state university campuses are targets for poaching recruiters from other states such as Texas , Florida, the Carolinas and Louisiana, all with one common lure- “The cost of doing business is cheaper”. Whether this is true or not, it is clear that NY State is concerned at the exodus of small business and its respective talent in the work force, (as evidenced with such campaigns such as “*Start- Up New York*”).

NY State ranks third amongst all States in the U.S. in terms of US Veteran population, yet has unacceptable levels of unemployed veterans. According to one source in the City of New York the rate of Veteran unemployment outpaces the unemployment rate of non-veterans. ("2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates"). It would seem intuitive to the casual observer that there is an immediately available labor force that is considered to be trainable, and proven in "follower-ship" and leadership skills. We have small businesses in NY that could benefit greatly from the economic stimulus of any tax incentive not the least of which deals with acquiring a talented labor force that has spent several years of their youth defending their country

I am very happy to say that our City has recently benefited from the energy and focus of a small business champion from my home base- Brooklyn. *The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce* has joined forces with my SBDC and other key veteran advocate organizations in addressing how to assist veterans in a variety of ways. This newly established coalition has been working to come up with answers to a variety of gaps that exist for veterans whether it be the workplace, marketplace or healthcare space. The Brooklyn Chamber has been instrumental in addressing potential innovative solutions for wider veteran infusion into the workplace in through its unique strength as an employer based organization.

The proposed resolution being discussed here today addresses key issues. It has the potential to relieve an economic burden to some degree for our growing small businesses as they continue to stake their claim here in NY. It also provides a great service by facilitating the employment of our men and women of the armed forces in greater numbers. I strongly endorse any resolution calling upon the Governor of NY to sign S.1707 and A. 4098 legislation establishing a veteran's tax credit for businesses that hire veterans and disabled veterans."

Sincerely,



Robert J. Piechota-Director

Small Business Development Center-Brooklyn

"If not you, then who? If not now, then when?"

S2101: VETERAN STATUS  
2008-2012 American Community Survey

Subject	Bronx		Kings		New York		Queens		Richmond	
	Total Estimate	%Veterans Estimate	Total Estimate	%Veterans Estimate	Total Estimate	%Veterans Estimate	Total Estimate	%Veterans Estimate	Total Estimate	%Veterans Estimate
Civilian population 18 years and over	1,018,611	36.544%	1,914,725	53.298%	1,357,943	44.800%	1,771,831	60.576%	359,323	20.880%
<b>PERIOD OF SERVICE</b>										
Gulf War (9/2001 or later) veterans	(X)	9.6%	(X)	10.5%	(X)	7.1%	(X)	9.2%	(X)	6.9%
Gulf War (8/1990 to 8/2001) veterans	(X)	11.6%	(X)	11.1%	(X)	9.0%	(X)	10.0%	(X)	7.7%
Vietnam era veterans	(X)	28.7%	(X)	27.4%	(X)	27.4%	(X)	28.4%	(X)	37.2%
Korean War veterans	(X)	11.3%	(X)	12.9%	(X)	13.8%	(X)	13.8%	(X)	15.5%
World War II veterans	(X)	9.4%	(X)	11.3%	(X)	16.8%	(X)	16.4%	(X)	11.3%
<b>SEX</b>										
Male	45.4%	93.4%	46.0%	93.2%	46.4%	94.2%	47.7%	94.1%	47.5%	96.9%
Female	54.6%	6.6%	54.0%	6.8%	53.6%	5.8%	52.3%	5.9%	52.5%	3.1%
<b>AGE</b>										
18 to 34 years	35.8%	9.5%	36.0%	10.1%	38.4%	6.9%	32.6%	8.7%	28.8%	5.9%
35 to 54 years	36.5%	28.5%	34.8%	23.6%	32.5%	16.2%	38.6%	19.8%	38.1%	16.5%
55 to 64 years	13.2%	24.0%	14.0%	21.5%	13.2%	17.1%	14.4%	19.7%	16.3%	26.9%
65 to 74 years	8.0%	16.6%	8.1%	19.3%	8.6%	23.9%	8.6%	19.9%	9.3%	23.9%
75 years and over	6.5%	21.3%	7.1%	25.5%	7.3%	35.9%	7.7%	31.7%	7.5%	26.9%
<b>MEDIAN INCOME IN THE PAST 12</b>										
Civilian population 18 years and over	20,118	31,152	25,944	32,564	40,844	42,305	28,014	36,013	35,643	44,948
Male	(X)	30,921	(X)	32,262	(X)	43,304	(X)	35,441	(X)	45,114
Female	(X)	35,313	(X)	39,266	(X)	27,500	(X)	27,743	(X)	42,835
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>										
Civilian population 25 years and over	856,206	36,099	1,653,399	52,494	1,183,138	44,349	1,557,125	59,577	315,455	20,642
Less than high school graduate	30.8%	14.7%	21.9%	11.7%	14.5%	7.5%	20.1%	10.8%	12.4%	10.8%
High school graduate (includes	27.2%	31.7%	27.6%	37.5%	12.7%	17.2%	27.3%	33.2%	32.7%	36.8%
Some college or associate's degree	23.9%	35.5%	20.7%	29.0%	14.7%	22.7%	22.7%	31.5%	25.9%	32.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher	18.0%	18.0%	29.8%	21.7%	58.1%	52.6%	29.9%	24.5%	29.0%	18.2%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>										
Civilian population 18 to 64 years	869,581	22,704	1,624,025	29,387	1,142,072	18,018	1,482,840	29,272	299,043	10,270
Labor force participation rate	69.9%	65.6%	73.3%	70.9%	77.0%	71.4%	76.6%	73.2%	71.3%	68.0%
Civilian labor force 18 to 64 years	608,007	14,893	1,190,256	20,825	879,561	12,871	1,135,648	21,438	213,348	6,981
Unemployment rate	14.0%	12.4%	10.2%	10.3%	8.6%	11.0%	9.4%	9.9%	7.3%	9.0%
<b>POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12</b>										
Civilian population 18 years and over	987,726	(X)	1,901,198	(X)	1,315,438	(X)	1,755,393	(X)	352,899	(X)
Below poverty in the past 12 months	0.5%	(X)	0.3%	(X)	0.4%	(X)	0.2%	(X)	0.3%	(X)
<b>DISABILITY STATUS</b>										
Civilian population 18 years and over	987,726	(X)	1,901,198	(X)	1,315,438	(X)	1,755,393	(X)	352,899	(X)
With any disability	1.0%	(X)	0.7%	(X)	0.9%	(X)	0.9%	(X)	1.5%	(X)
<b>PERCENT IMPUTED</b>										
Veteran status for the population 18	5.2%	(X)	5.5%	(X)	5.1%	(X)	6.9%	(X)	4.7%	(X)
Period of service for the civilian veteran	11.4%	(X)	9.9%	(X)	7.5%	(X)	11.2%	(X)	8.1%	(X)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012  
American Community Survey

Explanation of Symbols: An '(X)' means  
that the estimate is not applicable or not  
available.

SB0700CSA02: Statistics for All U.S. Firms by Industry, Veteran Status, and Gender  
for the U.S., States, Metro Areas, Counties, and Places: 2007

2007 Survey of Business Owners

Geographic area name	Meaning of 2007 NAICS code	Meaning of Veteran code	Year	Number of firms with or without paid employees
Bronx County, New York	Total for all sectors	Veteran-owned	2007	4,460
Bronx County, New York	Total for all sectors	Equally veteran-/nonveteran-owned	2007	1,475
Kings County, New York	Total for all sectors	Veteran-owned	2007	10,977
Kings County, New York	Total for all sectors	Equally veteran-/nonveteran-owned	2007	3,508
New York County, New York	Total for all sectors	Veteran-owned	2007	14,257
New York County, New York	Total for all sectors	Equally veteran-/nonveteran-owned	2007	5,364
Queens County, New York	Total for all sectors	Veteran-owned	2007	9,542
Queens County, New York	Total for all sectors	Equally veteran-/nonveteran-owned	2007	2,800
Richmond County, New York	Total for all sectors	Veteran-owned	2007	S
Richmond County, New York	Total for all sectors	Equally veteran-/nonveteran-owned	2007	920

S - Withheld because estimate did not meet publication standards



To: The Veterans' Committee of the New York City Council  
From: Military Families Speak Out New York Metro Chapter  
Date: March 28, 2014  
Re: Resolution to Support Tax Relief for Businesses that Hire Veterans since 2001.  
Calling upon the Governor to sign, and the NYS Legislature to pass, S1707 and A4098.

The veteran population that has served since 2001 is suffering from high unemployment rates. I recall a conversation I overheard in Harlem doing some work there on behalf of veterans: Referring to recent veterans' plight, one girl said to the other, "They went there and did all that, and come back to nothing."

In order to create the nexus for survival and successful reintegration of those veterans into civilian life, who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to serve their country, we call upon New York State to do its part and pass S1707 and A4098. New York State and New York City will benefit exponentially from having a stable veteran population that can contribute to the safety and economic well being of the community. By giving a tax break to companies that sometimes operate on fragile profit margins and the fluctuation of the market, it makes hiring veterans much more attractive to cost conscious entrepreneurs. We cannot expect a stable and prosperous community without facilitating hiring practices that encourage preferential hiring of veterans. We recall that the failure to reintegrate the veteran population of Russia after its war in Afghanistan was a huge factor in destabilizing Russia.

At this point most veterans are dependent upon the families that they came from for economic survival and aid in psychological reintegration. This is a complex and expensive endeavor. There is a backlog of 642 days for help from the VA, even a diagnosis of conditions. As noted in the Resolution, the veterans of recent wars returned to a collapsed economy. We are determined to succeed in supporting returning veterans, a challenge with a number of factors: one of the most important is a job.

Respectfully submitted,  
Military Families Speak Out NYC Metro Chapter

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AVI LESIGES

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BROOKLYN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Veterans Res. No. Tax Incentive

in favor     in opposition

Date: 3/28/2011

Name: Robert J. Piechota (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 25 Chapel St - 11th Fl

Brooklyn, NY 11201

I represent: Veterans - Small Business Dev Ctr

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOHN MAC DOUGALL

Address: 382 CENTRAL PARK WEST APT 2K

I represent: MFC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Honelle Hamanaka

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Military Families Speak Out

Address: NY NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms