



Testimony of Terrance R. Holliday,
Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs before City Council concerning
MOVA's Operation and the Role of the Office

June 23, 2014

Good morning Chairman Ulrich and the members of the Veterans Committee. My name is Terrance Holliday, and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you to testify about MOVA's Operation and the Role of the Office.

The Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs (MOVA) was established by Local Law 53 in 1987 and advises the Mayor on issues and initiatives impacting the veteran and military community. MOVA works closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (NYSDVA), City agencies, veteran organizations, area military commanders, and other stakeholders to assist active service members, veterans, their dependents and survivors. MOVA is one of only a handful of city-level veterans' constituent service offices in the United States.

Today, approximately 210,000 veterans of all generations reside within the five boroughs. Female veterans number 11 percent, or close to 24,000. Included in the veteran community are friends, family members, associates and others. This effectively increases the community we serve to approximately 1 million individuals. It is anticipated that New York State will welcome 44,000 veterans after combat operations cease overseas, and as the

Department of Defense drawdown continues over the next few years. This number will include military members separating or retiring to New York City, heading home or selecting New York City as their next destination in life.

The veteran community in New York City is extremely diverse and complex. Our veteran community consists of those who served during the eras of World War II; the Korean War; Vietnam War and Persian Gulf War --- Operations Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and New Dawn. During combat operations in Afghanistan, in addition to those concluded in December 2011 in Iraq, the United States witnessed the largest war-time mobilization of United States military reserve forces since World War II. The New York National Guard, the US Marines, Army, Navy and Coast Guard reservists headquartered in the Greater New York Metropolitan area made significant contributions to the overall combat presence. These veterans will, immediately and over time, present the most significant demand for services and reintegration support. This level of sustained combat operations witnessed the loss of 92 New Yorkers since 2002; the last of which was Army SSG Michael Ollis, of Staten Island, in 2013.

As a constituent services agency, MOVA provides advocacy, referral, and short-term case management services to veterans, their families, and dependents in an effort to ensure that they are aware of and have access to VA and City services. MOVA continuously strives to improve systems that enhance veterans' knowledge and access to all available City services. It is important to note that MOVA, unlike the United States Department of Veterans Affairs services all veterans, regardless of the condition of their discharge.

As part of its mission, MOVA coordinates the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB). The VAB advises the Commissioner of MOVA on all matters concerning veterans. It consists of

nine members, five of whom are appointed by the Mayor and four by the Speaker of the New York City Council. The Board meets quarterly, maintains a record of its deliberations, determines its own rules of procedure, and submits an annual report of its activities to the Mayor and the City Council. At my direction, the MOVA website is providing more detail about the VAB for the public.

In addition to the Mayoral appointed VAB, MOVA established a Women's Advisory Committee in 2012 to address the unique needs of female veterans. This committee consists of veterans and non-veterans active and well-versed in issues affecting this community. The activities of the Women's Advisory Committee are coordinated by MOVA military liaison Latisha Russaw, a USAF veteran. There are 8 volunteer members on this committee.

MOVA currently oversees the allocation of space to Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) on the 3rd floor of 346 Broadway. Currently, there are 16 veteran service organizations housed at 346 Broadway. These organizations have 501(c)(3) status, are guests of the Mayor's Office, and are provided office and meeting space at no cost. Additionally, several veteran organizations continue to use MOVA resources for meetings and communications only.

MOVA's staff is currently comprised of five full time staff members, three grant-funded Benefits Counselors, and two NYC Civic Corps members. In addition to MOVA's many projects and initiatives, these employees work on a day-to-day basis with veterans who call the office or walk-in seeking assistance and services, such as, burial assistance, housing, benefits, and employment. Today, I'm going to discuss a few of our most successful programs and initiatives.

Counselor's Initiative

In 2013, in order to address the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs claims backlog, MOVA received a grant from a private funder through the Robin Hood Foundation to hire three Veteran Benefits Counselors. This initiative is a “boots on the ground” approach to addressing the VA backlog by providing trained benefits counselors to assist veterans in preparing and filing VA claims for compensation quickly and accurately. The VA system can be a maze that many veterans are unable to navigate on their own. Veterans often wait years for their claims to be adjudicated if they are not filed properly. By having trained counselors on staff, MOVA is able to serve veterans, their dependents and families in obtaining federal benefits.

Despite the delay in accreditation due to the government shutdown in the fall, counselors have conducted outreach with hundreds of veterans by attending events and speaking engagements in the NYC area. Counselors work out of CUNY and nonprofit partner locations in Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn. Since official case tracking began in December, the three counselors have provided one-on-one counseling to over 150 veterans and filed 60 claims for compensation or pensions on their behalf. We are beginning to experience success with awards for increased benefits and pensions.

The \$ 250,000 funding through Robin Hood will be exhausted on July 31, 2014.

Unclaimed Indigent Burial Program

MOVA, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and the Public Administrator, developed a program to bury the dignified remains of indigent and unclaimed veterans in national cemeteries. Veterans completing an honorable period of service with any branch of the military are generally authorized to receive Final Military Honors (FMH). FMH consists of burial with a flag; coffin; two members of the military, including one member of the decedent's branch of service; and the playing of Taps. This service is executed with the pro bono support

of organizational friends such as the Catholic War Veterans, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vietnam Veterans of America, Rolling Thunder, Dignity Memorial Chapels, the Missing in America Project and others.

Thanks to this collaboration, NYC has honored 269 veterans since 2008.

MOVA Agency Liaisons

MOVA compiles and coordinates one specific liaison from each City agency to assist with veteran matters. MOVA's liaisons are also available as a resource on veterans matters to members of other City agencies. In a new initiative, MOVA has assigned a liaison to each of the City Borough Presidents to work on a local level assisting staff with veterans' issues.

In addition to providing information to the liaisons, MOVA has provided NYC agencies with U.S. Department of Labor training on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). USERRA is a federal law that prohibits discrimination and ensures job protections for members of the Armed Forces, Reserves, and National Guard in their civilian careers. It establishes the cumulative length of time that an individual may be absent from work for military duty and retain employment rights. USERRA prohibits employers from discriminating against members of the uniformed services. MOVA is an important resource for information on USERRA for City agencies and the public.

MOVA has been able to resolve human resources issues for NYC agencies by having direct contact with commanders and military staff, thus expediting fair and reasonable decisions at lower levels, saving time, money and inconvenience for all parties concerned.

Veterans' Clothing Closets

Developed in 2011, MOVA's Veterans' Suit Drive seeks to provide veterans transitioning into the workplace with suits and business attire for interviews. Since its inception, MOVA has provided 352 men and 45 women with suits and workplace attire. Through donation programs and our Suit Drive, we have acquired suits, shirts, ties, skirts and shoes for men and women seeking employment. In addition, MOVA hosts a Casual Clothing Flea Market for veterans and their families whenever we have a surplus of materials that are not suitable for employment.

Most of our clients are referred to MOVA by Workforce 1 and other partner organizations assisting veterans in their job hunt. By providing this service, MOVA enhances collaborations with other agencies and is able to build partnerships with nonprofit service organizations.

In 2013, MOVA partnered with the History Channel to provide veterans with \$50 gift cards from Macy's to supplement the suits they receive from MOVA. Staff screened each eligible recipient to ensure they complied with the History Channel's income requirements and standards. In total, MOVA distributed 96 gift cards totaling \$4,800 to veterans in need.

Coordination of City Services for Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has made it a priority to reduce and eventually eliminate veterans' homelessness by 2015. MOVA works in conjunction with the NYC Department of Homeless services to ensure homeless veterans are receiving proper placement in the City shelter system, including the City's two veteran shelters. MOVA also refers veterans to case managers at nonprofits, Veteran Service Organizations, and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which provides services to low-income veterans and their families having difficulty affording permanent housing.

MOVA has made it a priority to assist veterans in obtaining permanent housing. Last year, MOVA pushed for preference for veterans in Mitchell-Lama housing. Most recently, NYC has become a participant in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Mission Home: 25 Cities Initiative. This Mayoral Initiative is designed to assist NYC in meeting the federal goals of ending Veteran homelessness by 2015. MOVA will be working with other city agencies and organizations to meet this goal at the conclusion of the program in approximately 100 days.

Another way MOVA has been working to reduce veteran homelessness is by addressing veteran unemployment. While nationally we have seen Veterans doing slightly better than their non-veteran counterparts, veteran unemployment is still on the rise in NYC. According to the New York State Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for veterans over the past 12 months was averaged to be 11.7% in New York City. Based on previous trends, New York generally has a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the country among veterans and non-veterans alike.

MOVA has hosted job fairs, worked with the NYC Department of Small Business Services, and coordinated with Workforce1 to connect veterans with services to assist in their job search. Workforce1 employs veteran specialists in each of the boroughs, assigned to assist veterans directly with their employment search. MOVA also works closely with nonprofits and Veteran Service Organizations on job placement, training programs, resume preparation, and by providing clients with professional attire suitable for employment. MOVA also coordinates services with the NYC Human Resources Administration to assist veterans in need of public and food assistance.

Veterans' Treatment Courts

MOVA is a stakeholder in all three Veterans Treatment Courts in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. Veteran Treatment Courts are a hybrid court which functions as an alternative to incarceration for veterans who have been accused of nonviolent offenses. Veterans in Treatment Court are required to attend court appearances and treatment sessions and they are provided with mentors to help get them "back on track." The Court is regularly provided with updates of the veteran's progress. A MOVA staff member currently sits on the Board of the Bronx Veterans' Court and was instrumental in its development.

I have recently been appointed to the Mayor's Task Force on Behavioral Health and the Criminal Justice System. Over the next three months as the Task Force continues its work, I believe some of the same methods of responding to the needs of veterans in these Treatment Courts will serve as a successful example in addressing behavioral health in the criminal justice system.

Special Events and Partnerships

MOVA facilitates and participates in many events throughout NYC, such as the Mayor's Veterans' Day Breakfast, Veterans' Day Parade, Memorial Day parades, and Fleet Week. In the past, MOVA has hosted job fairs and housing fairs for veterans. Though our current office location is not conducive for these events, we hope to reinstate them after our move to Centre Street. MOVA's staff often performs outreach and represents the office at citywide fairs and events.

In another initiative, MOVA has helped shape the Medical Strategic Leadership Program held in NYC biannually. In a program sponsored by the US Army Surgeon General, American and Foreign military medical officers attend training sessions and seminars to discuss "best

practices.” MOVA has partnered with the FDNY Fire Academy to host a seminar on NYC agencies and disaster management. Past participants have included MOVA, OEM, the FDNY Training Division, NYC Service, the Harlem Vets Center and FDNY EMS Command.

MOVA has collaborated with Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons to host professional discussions on subjects such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). These discussions have been designed to alert medical and mental health providers to some of the issues they will experience as our service members seek treatment in civilian facilities.

MOVA hosted two Black History Month events to great success. It is my hope that we are able to continue successful programing such as this event, especially as we look to implement new events honoring women and other groups in the military.

Conclusion

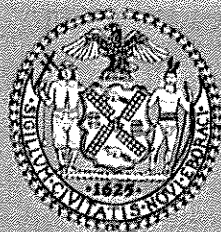
Over the past few years, MOVA has fostered active partnerships with agencies, non-profit, and for-profit organizations to ensure that first class services are available to NYC veterans. As we represent constituents that are in need of assistance, our successes are large and small. I hope this gives you a glimpse of what we are doing at MOVA and I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you and share both our accomplishments and our vision. I would be happy to answer your questions.

MOVA's 2013 Accomplishments

Military Service in City Government

8,934

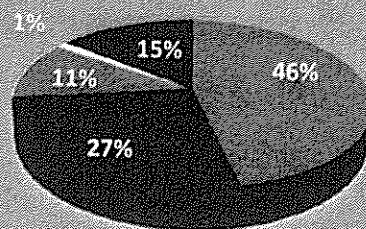
city employees
 served in the military.
 Over **1,000** are still
 serving as **Reservists**



Clients Served

■ Benefits:
 ■ Housing:
 ■ Other:

■ City Services:
 ■ Medical:



Total Clients Served: 1,206

Employment Assistance

The Veteran Clothes Closet
 Program has served



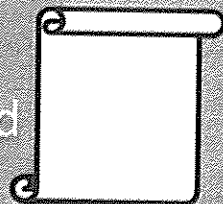
250

50 Veterans were
 helped with jobs



Veteran Claim Assistance

Our accredited claim
 officers have reached **190**
 veterans in a
3 month period



Housing Assistance

134

Veterans helped
 with Rent,
 Housing, Eviction, and
 Homelessness



Burial Assistance

256



Veterans
 and families received
 burial assistance

CONTACT CHILD SUPPORT FOR MORE INFORMATION

**New York State Child Support Customer Service
Hotline**

Call Center: Monday - Friday 8AM to 7PM

Automated Information 24 hours/7 days

888-208-4485 | 866-875-9975 (TTY)

NYC OCSE

www.nyc.gov/hra/ocse

Fatherhood Information

www.nyc.gov/nycdads

NY State Child Support Information

www.newyorkchildsupport.com

OCSE Customer Service Walk-in Center

151 West Broadway, 4th Floor

Monday-Friday 8AM to 7PM



Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Social Services

Robert Doar
Commissioner

BRC-039 (E)
Rev. 08/12

Copyright 2012, The City of New York Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services
For permission to reproduce all or part of this material contact the New York City Human Resources Administration

Manage Your Child Support



NYC Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Social Services

If you are a noncustodial parent (parent not living with your child) and have a current child support order or child support debt that you cannot afford to pay, the NYC Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) may be able to help you.

We know for various reasons, you may owe a lot of child support debt or have an order that is out of line with your income. But we also know that most dads want to pay their child support and we want to help you do that. Kids who receive income from both parents do better in school and are less likely to grow up in poverty. Dads who pay child support are more likely to be actively involved in their children's lives.

Families receiving cash assistance keep the first \$100 (\$200 for 2 more children) in child support collected each month. This is in addition to their cash assistance benefits. When the cash assistance case closes, all of the money collected for current support is forwarded to the custodial parent (parent living with and caring for the child). Over 90% of the child support payments collected by OCSE are forwarded to custodial parents to meet the needs of their children.

In an effort to help you, Child Support has developed three programs that work with low-income noncustodial parents (NCPs) to reduce child support orders and arrears (child support debt) owed to the Department of Social Services (DSS).

MODIFY DSS ORDER (MDO)

MDO can help low-income NCPs who have child support orders that are not based on their current income. If your financial situation has changed since the order was established, or you did not present your financial information in court, MDO could help you.

To Qualify:

- Current child support order with at least one child on cash assistance
- Income below the New York State Self-Support Reserve (\$15,080 for 2012) or
- Receiving Cash Assistance, SSI or Medicaid

Benefit to You:

Your child support order may be lowered to make it consistent with New York State guidelines; you can sign an agreement that will reduce the amount of your child support obligation without going to Family Court.

ARREARS CAP INITIATIVE

Arrears Cap can put a limit on accumulated child support debt that you owe the government (DSS).

To Qualify:

- Must owe arrears to the government (DSS); not required to have current or active child support order
- Arrears must have built up while NCPs income was below the Federal Poverty Level (\$14,170 for 2012)

Benefit to You:

Arrears that you owe to DSS may be reduced down to \$600; you do not have to return to court.



ARREARS CREDIT PROGRAM (ACP)

ACP can help you reduce the amount of arrears owed to the government.

To Qualify:

- Owe arrears to DSS
- No income limit; not required to be living at or below poverty level
- Make full payments on your current child support order(s) for an entire year. If you do not have a current child support order, you must make full payments for an entire year on the obligation amount set in your last court order.
- Have a current or past child support order that is or was above a poverty order of \$25 per month
- Have no more than \$3,000 in the bank or more than \$5,000 in property, such as cars, jewelry or real estate
- No record of domestic violence or criminal record of crimes against children

Benefit to You:

You may receive a yearly credit of up to \$5,000 towards the child support debt you owe to DSS. You can take advantage of ACP for 3 years and earn a total credit of \$15,000 for each eligible case. You do not have to go to Family Court to apply for this program.

Apply for MDO, Arrears Cap, or Arrears Credit Programs by Visiting:

OCSE Customer Service Walk-In Center | 151 West Broadway, 4th floor | Hours: Monday – Friday, 9am to 7pm

You Must Have a Photo ID

Please arrive no later than 2 hours before closing to allow enough time to complete the application process.

Documents to Bring to the Customer Service Center:

- Photo ID
- Proof of receipt of Cash Assistance, SSI, or Medicaid (if applicable)
- Three (3) most recent pay stubs
- Most recent Federal and State tax returns
- Completed, signed, and notarized Affidavit of Net Worth (download from <http://www.nyc.gov/hra/ocse> or noncustodial parent information)
- Proof of past income below the Federal Poverty Level (if applying for Arrears Cap)
- Proof of dates of incarceration – letter from prison or Department of Corrections

FEDERAL BENEFITS CONTINUED

NYC VET CENTERS

Harlem Vet Center
2279 3rd Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10035
Phone: (646) 273-8139
Fax: (212) 426-8273

Manhattan Vet Center
32 Broadway 2nd Fl, Suite 200
New York, NY 10004
Phone: (212) 742-9591
Fax: (212) 742-9593

Queens Vet Center
75-10B 91st Avenue
Woodhaven, NY 11421
Phone: (718) 296-2871
Fax: (718) 296-4660

Staten Island Vet Center
60 Bay Street
Staten Island, NY 10301
Phone: (718) 816-4499
Fax: (718) 816-6899

EDUCATION

City University of New York (CUNY) has one of the largest veteran student population in the US, with over 3,000 enrolled veterans. CUNY consists of 11 four-year colleges, 7 community colleges, the Graduate Center, the Graduate School of Journalism, the CUNY School of Law, the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, the School of Professional Studies, the CUNY Baccalaureate Program, the Macaulay Honors College and the Online Baccalaureate Program. CUNY offers a wide range of special programs and options to veterans seeking a high-quality undergraduate or graduate education. For information about veterans' tuition and enrollment visit: www.cuny.edu/veterans

State — New York State Veterans Tuition Award (VTA) awards aid to eligible veterans matriculated in an undergraduate or graduate program or an approved vocational training program within NYS. Eligible veterans for this program are New York State residents honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces who served in:

- Vietnam/ Indochina between 12/22/61-5/7/75;
- Persian Gulf on or after 8/2/90;
- Afghanistan during or after 9/11/01; or
- Vets who served in hostilities after 12/22/61 and received an Armed Forces, Navy or Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal.

Eligible veterans receive up to 98 percent off the cost of undergraduate tuition. CUNY part-time students receive awards that are prorated by credit hour. If a student receives TAP and it exceeds tuition, TAP will be reduced accordingly. Students have to apply yearly for payment by completing the FAFSA, TAP and NYS Veterans Tuition Award Supplement. For more information, visit: www.hesc.com and select "Military Corner"

Federal — Veterans can apply for GI Bill benefits at the US Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office
245 West Houston St.
New York, NY 10014
Phone: (800) 827-1000
Fax: (212) 807-4024

OTHER SERVICES

HOMELESS

Project Torch
Homeless Single Adult Veterans Extension
40 Flatbush Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Subway: F to Jay Street
Phone: (718) 439-4345
Fax: (718) 439-4356

Families with Children Under 21 Years Old

Pregnant Families (single pregnant women, pregnant couples, or parent/grandparent(s) with a pregnant child 21 years of age or over)

Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) Office
151 E. 151st Street
Bronx, NY 10451
Open 24 hours, 7 days a week

Adult Families with No Children Under 21
Adult Family Intake Center (AFIC)
400-430 East St./ 1st Ave.
New York, NY 10016
Open 24 hours, 7 days a week

LEGAL, HEALTH, AND COUNSELING

Free Legal Assistance
City Bar Justice Center
www.citybarjusticecenter.org
or by calling 311

Mental Health Emergency
Mental Health Services
1.800.LIFENET or
1.800.543.3638

Suicide Hotline
1.800.273.TALK
1.800.273.8255

Domestic Violence
Dial 911 for emergency
1.800.621.HOPE
1.800.621.4673

Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs
346 Broadway, 3 East
New York, NY 10013
Phone (212) 442-4171
Fax (212) 312-0950
www.nyc.gov/veterans

NYC

Mayor's Office of
Veterans' Affairs

NYC
311



NYC VETERANS' SERVICES INFORMATION GUIDE

www.nyc.gov/veterans

NEW YORK CITY BENEFITS

Veterans' Property Tax Exemption

NYC Department of Finance

For detailed information and applications please visit: www.nyc.gov/dof

Qualified veterans and certain family members are eligible for property tax exemptions up to 15% of their assessed property value. A qualified veteran is one who served during one of the following periods of war or conflict:

- Persian Gulf Conflict (Beginning August 2, 1990 to Present)
- Vietnam War (February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975)
- Korean War (June 27, 1950 to January 31, 1955)
- World War II (December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946)

Military Request For Relief

Active duty military personnel may request relief from the Lien Sale, Tax Warrants, Environmental Control Board judgments, and parking judgments by completing an affidavit that provides information about their military service. www.nyc.gov/dof

Veterans Preference Points for NYC Civil Service Examinations

NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services
For detailed information and applications please visit:
www.nyc.gov/dcas

General Vending License

NYC Department of Consumer Affairs
In order to receive a General Vendors License, you must take your DD-214 and a current form of identification to: the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, 42 Broadway, 5th Floor, Licensing Division. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. For detailed information and applications please visit:
www.nyc.gov/dca

About MOVA

The Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs (MOVA) was mandated by local law 53 of the New York City Charter in 1987. MOVA advises the Mayor on issues and initiatives impacting the veteran and military community and works with the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs (NYSOVA), City Agencies, veterans' organizations, and other stakeholders to offer services to veterans, their dependents, and survivors; while encouraging innovative partnerships to ensure creative problem solving. For detailed information, please visit: www.nyc.gov/veterans

NEW YORK STATE BENEFITS



For additional information on these, and other NYS programs for veterans and military please visit: <http://www.veterans.ny.gov>

NYS Employment

The Governor's Program to Hire Veterans with Disabilities provides employment opportunities in State service for veterans.

New York State Veterans' Homes

NYS Veterans' Homes are skilled nursing facilities owned and operated by the NYS Department of Health for veterans and their dependents.

Blind Annuity Program

The Blind Annuity benefit is for legally blind New York State wartime veterans or the surviving un-remarried spouse of the blind veteran. The program authorizes an annuity payment of up to \$1,220.76 per veteran.

Homes for Veterans' Program

Offers fixed-rate mortgages with interest rates 0.5% below the already low interest rates charged on SONYMA mortgages with closing cost assistance.

NYS Gold Star Parent Annuity

Authorizes an annuity payment of up to \$500 per Gold Star parent of a deceased veteran.

NYS Property Tax Exemption

Provides a partial exemption on real property taxes to veterans of defined periods of war, veterans who received expeditionary medals or certain family members, as allowed by law.

EZ Pass for Disabled Veterans

A Disabled Veteran who is qualified for and obtains a fee exempt vehicle registration from the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles may enroll in the Authority's Disabled Veteran Non-Revenue EZ Pass program.

Supplemental Burial Allowance

Supplemental Burial Allowance of up to \$6,000 is authorized for certain military personnel killed in combat or while on active duty in hostile/imminent danger locations on or after September 29, 2003.

FEDERAL BENEFITS

Veterans Benefit Administration

NY Regional Office

For additional information on these, and other US Department of Veterans Affairs programs for veterans, please visit: www.va.gov
245 W Houston Street, New York, NY 10014
Phone: (800) 827-1000
Fax: (212) 807-4024

The New York Regional Office serves veterans living in the 31 Eastern counties of New York State. Some of the benefits administered to eligible veterans are Compensation & Pension, Education benefits, Burial benefits, the Loan Guaranty Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

VA Health Benefits

VA provides health benefits to eligible veterans and provides eligible veterans who served in a theater of combat operations five years of free health care beginning on the date of discharge or release from service.

NYC VA Hospitals

The VA NY Harbor Healthcare System (Manhattan)
423 East 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010
Phone: (212) 686-7500
Fax: (718) 567-4082

The VA NY Harbor Healthcare System (Brooklyn)
800 Poly Place
Brooklyn, NY 11209
Phone: (718) 836-6600
Fax: (718) 567-4082

James J. Peters VA Medical Center
130 West Kingsbridge Road
Bronx, NY 10468
Phone: (718) 584-9000/(800) 877-6976
Fax: (718) 741-4269

NYC VET CENTERS

Vet Centers provide counseling and employment services to eligible veterans and family members.

Bronx Vet Center
2471 Morris Ave., Suite 1A
Bronx, NY 10468
Phone: (718) 367-3500
Fax: (718) 364-6867

Brooklyn Veterans Resource Center
25 Chapel St., Suite 604
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Phone: (718) 630-2830
Fax: (718) 624-3323

**New York City Veterans Advisory Board
346 Broadway 3ed Fl. East Wing
New York, NY 10013**

Testimony for New York City Council hearing on Mayors Office of Veteran
Affairs June 23, 2014

The Mayors Office of Veteran Affairs (MOVA) was established by local law # 53 in 1987.

The NYC Veteran's community has received many benefits from this NYC Agency. The level of attention to the needs if the Community at this Agency has always reflected its leadership.

MOVA advises the Mayor on issues & initiatives important to the Veteran and Military communities.

MOVA coordinates with the US Department of Veteran Affairs, the NYS Division of Veteran Affairs, Veteran & Military organizations & all stake holders in the Veteran Community.

MOVA coordinates the interaction between the NYC Veteran's Advisory Board and NYC Agencies.

MOVA encourages innovative partnerships to ensure creative problem solving.

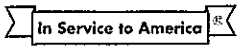
Over the past year MOVA has successfully managed to transition the community from the historic "Veterans Hall" at 346 Broadway into temporary space while the community prepares to move its office space into the Municipal building. Estimated move time is January 2015.

There have been times in the past when there was less than adequate participation between the Community and the Agency. The current administration of MOVA has worked very well throughout the community & has made a positive difference in the attitude of the community toward the Agency.

Thank you for your attention to the concerns of the Veterans Community.

Respectfully submitted,


Vince McGowan, Chairman
New York City Veteran's Advisory Board



Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

Angel Almedina Manhattan Chapter 126

From: Joseph G. Graham - President -
Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 126
Date: Monday, June 23, 2014
Re: Testimony for MOVA – Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs

MOVA was established in 1987 with the passage of Local Law 53. The primary mission of MOVA is to ensure that NYC resident veterans and their families receive the services promised to them as a result of their military service.

The current veteran population in NYC is approximately 200,000, with an estimated 45,000 more veterans returning to NY in the next five years as reported by Crain's NY. 4-21-2013

The need for the services and support that MOVA offers our veteran community is growing.

I urge the City Council to take into consideration the increasing needs of our veteran's community as our young men and women come home from multiple deployments to hostile countries.

Large numbers of these young men and women are returning to our city broken and suffering from extreme cases of PTSD and traumatic brain injuries; not to mention severe physical injuries/wounds.

MOVA's ability to mentor these veterans is critical. With the leadership of Commissioner Terry Holliday, our city is fortunate to have a proven professional. Commissioner Holliday's many years in the military gives him unique insight into the organizational workings of a government/military organization.

Commissioner Holliday's dedication is readily apparent. His always jovial good cheer and sincere interest in veterans is conveyed to all. He is respected in our veteran's community from the enlisted man to the four star generals that he meets with regularly. Under Commissioner Holliday direction, the Mayor's Office of Veteran's Affairs has helped veterans in the following ways:

1. Operation Stand Down - helps homeless veterans find housing and shelter such as the Borden Avenue homeless shelter in Queens NY
2. Career Job Fairs – held annually at MOVA's offices to help veterans find employment



Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

Angel Almedina Manhattan Chapter 126

3. Veterans Service Officers Program – helps veterans to register with the Veteran's Administration for medical and education benefits
4. Burial Services – MOVA works to identify deceased homeless veterans and insures that they receive proper burials in military cemeteries

This is only a partial list of services provided by MOVA for the veterans of NYC.

In closing, I strongly urge Terry Holliday's continuation as Commissioner for Veteran's Affairs for NYC. I also urge the NYC Council and Mayor di Blasio increase funding for this much needed office.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph G. Graham
President Vietnam Veterans of America
Chapter 126

Testimony before the Committee on Veterans

My name is Paul Schottenhamel from Glendale Queens. I am one of almost a quarter of a million veterans in New York City.

I am a retired Lieutenant Colonel, who served 29 years as an infantry officer in the Active Army, National Guard and Army Reserve. I served in combat in Vietnam and Cambodia, and was wounded in action and awarded the Purple Heart. The VA declared me 40% service connected disabled.

I would like to address the following issues:

Disposition of Unclaimed Veterans,

Funding for Veteran Benefits Counselors

Size of the MOVA Budget

Endorsement of Commissioner Terrance Holliday

Disposition of Unclaimed Veterans

I have been a member of The American Legion for the past 12 years and I am currently the Commander of the Joseph B. Garity Post 562 and the Adjutant of Queens County. Since 2009, one of my duties has been to arrange for the burial of Unclaimed Veterans from New York City in the National Cemetery at Calverton. If we did not do this, all those veterans would have been buried in unmarked graves in the City Cemetery on Hart Island. This duty brought me in contact with MOVA.

Initially, we had long time delays between being assigned a burial and the availability of the body for pickup by the funeral home. MOVA was able to streamline the process, especially after the arrival of Commissioner Holliday, by ensuring that such diverse agencies such as the Medical Examiner, Human Resources Administration, and Public Administrator had actually completed their work and the body could be released to us. Today we experience no delays.

MOVA has shown its commitment to the Unclaimed Veterans because Commissioner Holliday and/or a member of his staff have attended almost all the funerals we have conducted.

Generally if unclaimed deceased persons have no provisions for the final disposition of their remains, they are buried in an unmarked grave on Hart Island. For the last several years it has been the City policy that if an unclaimed deceased has any indication that he or she ever served in the US military, the City would see if that individual was entitled to burial in a national

cemetery. That is when MOVA refers the burial to an Organizational Friend, such as Queens County American Legion.

We recommend that the City Council pass a bill to change that policy into a law. It should include the spouses of a deceased veteran if he or she is also entitled to burial in a National Cemetery.

Funding for Veteran Benefits Counselors

With the aging of the veteran population in New York City, and the addition of new veterans the need to aid them in getting the support from the VA that they have earned by their service has not diminished. The American Legion and other VSOs have a long history of providing service officers to assist veterans in processing claims. The VA recently posted a video on Facebook recommending that all veterans reach out to VSOs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEyYefKprzU&feature=youtu.be>

To quote the VA website:

"This video explains the benefits of working with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to file a Fully Developed Claim (FDC). VSO representatives, once appointed as a Power of Attorney, can help gather documents on a Veteran's behalf and ensure an FDC is complete before it is submitted.

"An FDC submitted via a VSO representatives are more completed and processed by the VA in a shorter time than one submitted by a veteran without help.

"To view a list of accredited VSOs, visit <http://www.va.gov/vso> or log into eBenefits at <http://www.eBenefits.va.gov>. More information on the FDC Program can also be found at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/fdc>."

These service officers must be trained and certified by the VA. MOVA has three Veteran Benefit Counselors who were hired and trained with a grant from the Robin Hood Foundation. But this funding will expire in September. Unless the City Council votes for the fund this valuable asset, it will be lost. Since they are fully trained and certified, the City will save the startup cost.

During the last several years, MOVA has expanded its contacts with the veteran community. Having Veteran Benefit Counselors allows MOVA to reach out to veterans who wish to file claims with the VA. This capability is not provided by other City Agencies.

Size of the MOVA Budget

On several occasions, Commissioner Holliday explained why his budget was so small. His main emphasis has been to get other City agencies do their jobs when it came to supporting veterans. This should be a model for all City agencies.

It makes no sense to saddle MOVA with responsibilities for providing services when other city agencies should be doing that job. The City Council would do better if they make every attempt to require all agencies identify all the veterans they serve and provide the services the veterans are entitled to receive. Duplication of services is not the answer.

For those services unique to the veteran community, I recommend that MOVA be expanded to a Department with its own line in the budget. All personnel should be paid from that budget rather than on-loan from other Departments. Additional Veteran Benefit Counselors could be added to meet the workload, hopefully expanding to the other boroughs.

Endorsement of Commissioner Terrance Holliday

Since 2011, the leadership of The American Legion has worked more closely with Commissioner Terrance Holliday. He has reached out to us and we reached back. Prior to his arrival, many veterans thought that the City was abandoning its veterans. We believe that the Commissioner is moving MOVA in the right direction.

It is the consensus of the leadership of The American Legion of the five counties in New York City to encourage Mayor de Blasio to keep Commissioner Terrance Holliday on as Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs. We feel the Mayor and the City will be well served.



United War Veterans Council, Inc.

From: Patrick Gualtieri, Executive Director, United War Veterans Council, Inc.
Date: Monday, June 23, 2014
Re: Testimony for MOVA (Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs)

Morale:

Located in the same quarters as MOVA for the 14 years of my UWVC tenure, I've witnessed firsthand the valuable services of MOVA, and in particular, Commissioner Holliday. With him on board, I've seen positive change resulting in high morale and productivity at MOVA. In addition, this extends to the veterans and service professionals with whom they interact.

Sharing:

Commissioner Holliday brings a wealth of experience from his former military service on the inner workings of the military and veterans' community. He is always willing to share information and guidance. His office and staff are always open and accessible to us and continues to be a great resource of information, assistance, visibility and service to our veterans' community.

Presence:

I've attended many events with MOVA's presence. The Commissioner and staff conduct themselves in a professional manner and extend their services to help the veterans community.

Helping veterans:

- Clothing Drive: We've witnessed the success of many MOVA programs such as this where many veterans came to these offices to secure clothing for personal and/or professional use. Each were warmly welcomed and handled.
- Career/Job Fair/Job Postings Services: Held on-site; very well attended with many companies and services present as well as job seekers (veterans). UWVC was welcome to participate which resulted in new volunteers coming aboard.
- Veterans Benefits: We have seen veterans receiving help and aid from MOVA, being helped one-on-one and/or directed to the correct agency.
- Emergency Preparedness Program: Helpful in preparing for emergency situation should the need arise; including the preparation and use of a 'go-to' bag.



United War Veterans Council, Inc.

- CERT/Medical First Aid: Held on-site session with certified representatives to train, explain and engage attendees. Demonstrated life-saving techniques for medical crisis.
- Resources: MOVA provides valuable data on servicemen and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam from the five boroughs. Further, MOVA updates the casualties to include those lost in OIF/OEF from the 5 boroughs. MOVA is also instrumental in insuring deceased homeless veterans receive an honorable, befitting burial.
- Annual NYC Veterans Day Parade: UWVC produces the parade under the helpful guidance of MOVA, who helps facilitate coordination with city agencies. MOVA also insures that invitations to the Mayor's Veterans' Breakfast on Veterans Day are extended to the appropriate parties, i.e., veterans, VIP military and corporate guests.

Veterans Are Still Warriors

Veterans Serving Veterans, Inc.

Under tax-exempt IRS code Section 501(c)(3)

346 Broadway ~ Suite 3 East ~ Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs ~ New York, New York 10013

Phone 347-490-6968 Email VeteransRStillWarriors@Gmail.com

Thursday the 1st day of May, 2014

From the Desk of Dr. Farley

From the early days in 2011 President Obama petitioned the religious communities to play a greater role in rescuing our veterans that had become discouraged and disillusioned with government agencies. VASW mission has always been that no veteran should have to stand alone. Grassroots, Street Ministry...call it what you please. VASW is committed to this new battlefield.

We are almost halfway through 2014 with the VASW workload having increased approximately 25 percent. Our court appearances throughout New York State are also on the rise. The veterans' community in New York City is requiring more emphasis in family court and civil and housing issues. Our income revenue is zero; VASW received no financial support from any city, state, or government agencies. This year alone we have incurred an operating cost of over seven thousand dollars (salaries, supplies, transportation, and USPS). VASW volunteer base has also increased.

Because of this, our offices will be closed for the month of May 2014 for field training in all five boroughs. The training modules will address, identify and target veterans in crisis (HRA, court houses) throughout the tri-state area. The goal is to have a veteran's advocate in every court house in NYC.

Training Schedule:

*5th thru 9th May: 2014 Brooklyn~ NYS Civil Courts, NYC Criminal Court, HRA Centers
12th thru 16th May: 2014 Bronx ~ NYS Civil Courts, NYC Criminal Court, HRA Centers
19th thru 23rd May: 2014 South & North Carolina ~ Developing VASW Officers
26st thru 30th May: 2014 Queens & New Jersey ~ NYS Civil Court, HRA*

Program Plan:

*Veterans' Writers' Workshop & Thespian Group
Warriors BBQ Cooking Contest
Understanding & Identifying Veterans Training Modules (Breaking the DD 214 Code)
Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway
Christmas Book Giveaway*

The United Staten Island Veterans Organization, Inc.



Founded By The Memorial & Executive Committee

James Haynes III

Commander

198 Justin Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10306

OFFICERS:

James Haynes III
Commander

Joseph DiGiovanni
1st Vice Commander

Fred Black
2nd Vice Commander

Vito Giobbie
3rd Vice Commander

Peter Pinto
Adjutant

Lee Covino
Treasurer

Bernard H. Eldredge
Chaplain

Richard Pfluger
Sergeant at Arms

Martin Satloff
Judge Advocate

VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

American Legion
American Merchant Marine
ANZIO Beachhead Veterans
Battle of the Bulge Veterans
Catholic War Veterans
Disabled American Veterans
Fleet Reserve Assn. #226
Jewish War Veterans
Korean War Veterans
Marine Corps League
Masonic War Veterans
Military Order of Purple Heart
Naval Enlisted Reserve Assn.
Pearl Harbor Survivors Assn.
369th Richmond District
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America, 421

SUPPORTED BY
Rolling Thunder Chapter 2
Gov. Dongan Assembly K of C
SIBP-Staten Island Business People

STATEMENT OF LEE S. COVINO, TREASURER UNITED STATEN ISLAND VETERANS ORGANIZATION, INC.

BEFORE

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

250 BROADWAY – 16TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

June 23, 2014

Honorable Chairman, distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans, we appreciate this opportunity to feedback on the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) at today's hearing.

My name is Lee Covino, and I am a board officer of The United Staten Island Veterans Organization, Inc. (USIVO), an umbrella organization comprised of representatives from the veteran's organizations operating on Staten Island. While USIVO's primary mission is to sponsor the Borough's annual Memorial Day Parade, our group also participates in other charitable veterans causes and is involved with issues affecting our veterans throughout the year.

Today, we wish to concentrate on one issue only: the urgent need for city funding of three trained and certified Veterans Service Officers (VSO) currently based at MOVA.

Earlier this year, the City Council requested \$400,000 in FY 2015 funds to support these VSO's, who have been trained to file VA claims on behalf of the city's veterans. Mayor deBlasio did not include these funds in his executive budget, and the allocation does not appear to be a part of the recent budget agreement between the Mayor and the City Council.

Previously, a start-up grant from the Robin Hood Foundation helped the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs to hire and train the VSO's. Without city funding, these services will cease on September 30. Our only hope is that the needed funding appears in the adopted budget later this month.

VSO's are a necessary part to filing a successful VA claim, because of the technical nature of proving medical disabilities. The New York State Division of Veterans Affairs has only one VSO on Staten Island and only a handful in the other boroughs. And service officers working for traditional veteran organizations are aging out and not being replaced in many instances. At the same time, thousands of recently discharged veterans are expected to return to the five Boroughs as the military drawdown reaches its peak in the coming year.

Successful claims bring federal dollars to the city's economy. The State knows full well the value of bringing these federal dollars and VA services into our economy, and they have employed VSO's both upstate and downstate for many decades. It is now time that our City pitches in to assist in the already overwhelming caseload. Without the VSO's many veterans would wind up on City benefits and services.

With Memorial Day in the rear-view mirror, it is time to follow the VFW's motto: "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living." We must all do more than just march in parades. Thank you.

URBAN
JUSTICE
CENTER

**VETERAN
ADVOCACY
PROJECT**

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

Eric A. Ulrich, Chair

**Oversight: The Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs:
Examining the Role of MOVA in Serving New York City's Veterans**

Testimony by Coco Culhane, Esq.
Director, Veteran Advocacy Project
Urban Justice Center

June 23, 2014

Good morning members of the Committee on Veterans. My name is Coco Culhane and I am the director of the Veteran Advocacy Project at the Urban Justice Center. We provide free legal services to low-income veterans with a focus on those living with Post-Traumatic Stress, substance abuse problems, and traumatic brain injury. Thank you for the invitation to testify about the role of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs ("MOVA").

As the committee moves forward examining how to address veterans needs in New York City and what MOVA's role should be, the first step is to look at what the office is now. New York City's charter offers a scant 252 words on the role of the commissioner of veterans' affairs. The powers and duties enumerated are broad enough that MOVA has the potential to do great things but, as we all know, the office has been underfunded and has served as a placeholder for a figurehead, rather than as an agency truly serving our city's veterans.

The mayor's budget proposal, which offered a paltry few extra dollars to MOVA, sent a message about the priority of veterans' issues for this administration. However, that does not mean that the office cannot be effective. It can be a hub for all of the inspiring work that so many organizations do for our servicemembers. The largest challenges being tackled include the benefits backlog, the appalling state of some VA medical centers, the unemployment rate, and the suicide rates for both active duty military and veterans. One thing these problems all have in common is a lack of coordinated efforts to combat them. And New York City is one of the worst offenders when it comes to this. MOVA could lead the way in uniting initiatives and creating a public awareness campaign for veterans' resources.

I believe that a detailed inventory of the vast resources of this city will reveal that there are hundreds if not thousands of programs available to veterans, and there is no one place that actually keeps track of them. MOVA should be that place. New York City's problem is not a lack of services; it is a lack of communication and connection. Take for example VA benefits. I can think of at least 25 organizations that assist veterans with disability compensation claims in the five boroughs. There are surely even more that exist. The problem is that very few people in this room could list them all and my guess is that no one in this room could precisely list which do applications and which work on appeals. I know I can't. That is a problem MOVA can fix.

Nearly every veteran my office serves gets referrals to other initiatives and whether it is a job program or a mental health resource outside the VA, the response from the client is almost always: *I had no idea that existed*. When we do presentations or trainings for other providers and we include lists of resources, we hear the same thing. I have said those words myself. If people whose life's work is to assist veterans in New York don't know about other local programs, how do we expect a veteran to? MOVA is the answer to this problem.

Too many organizations complain that they can't find veterans. The reality is that they are not looking. It is our job to conduct outreach. It should be MOVA's job to create public awareness campaigns. There should be ads in the subway telling veterans to call MOVA for assistance (and MOVA should be able to send them to the right place without fail). It should be a centralized place for both providers and veterans to connect. CUNY campuses should be plastered with flyers, city websites should be up to date and easy to navigate with detailed lists of resources. MOVA is in a unique position to be the starting point for every veteran, whether he has been here for fifty years and now needs intensive health care at home or just moved here to start at City College and needs someone to work on a GI Bill issue.

Throwing money at MOVA and asking them to provide services that already exist is not going to solve any systemic problems. It's not going to stop suicides. It's not going to prevent homelessness or keep veterans in school. This is not to say that the terrific work their benefits counselors have been doing this past year is without value. Rather, it is that the office as a whole could have a much larger impact in our city by utilizing its unique position in the community.

Funding must come with a clear mandate that defines the office's goals. Any changes should leverage the fact that MOVA can play a unique role as a connector. It can link people and programs and it can also work on creating a sense that New York is a place that truly welcomes those who served. It cannot achieve this unless resources are provided and the city government actually demonstrates that it is paying attention and expects results. If I were a veteran starting out in New York right now I would assume that the city doesn't care *at all* about vets. That is shameful and must change.

New York needs to communicate to all veterans that their care is a priority and then prove it by being able to guide them in building their lives. MOVA can do this if the orders are clear.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.



June 23, 2014

Subject : Testimony of Robert J. Piechota, Director-Brooklyn Small Business Development Center in reference to: *Oversight: The Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs – Examining the Role of MOVA in Serving New York City's 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 worked for over four years in the greater NY City area with veterans in transition. Vital in my roles over the past four years, has been the necessity to become familiar with the many organizations in and about NY City that assist, support, and somehow impact upon veterans of all eras, primarily dealing with career paths, career transitions and entrepreneurialship. I am also a Viet Nam era veteran and a West Point graduate (79').

I have worked with the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs, ("MOVA") since June of 2011. Commissioner Terrance Holliday has been commissioner since my tenure as one of the principal advisors to veterans across all five boroughs as they seek to improve their small business operations, or even as they seek to enter into small business for the first time. My scope of service extends not only to veterans but to their qualified family members as well. The intent of my comments today have little to do with Commissioner Holliday, but rather the role of "MOVA".

The mission statement of "MOVA" as stated on its web page is:. MOVA advises the Mayor on issues and initiatives impacting the veteran and military community. MOVA works with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (NYSDVA), City Agencies, veteran's organizations and other stakeholders to offer services to veterans, their dependents and survivors; while encouraging innovative partnerships to ensure creative problem solving.

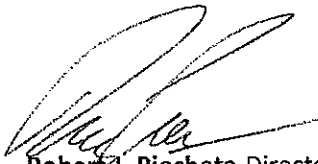
It would require the collective intelligence in this room times 100 to master such a mission. Given a rather meager staff and operating budget MOVA has leveraged its networking resources linking over fifty non-profit NYC Veteran support agencies, including my NY City network of Small Business Development centers. I can in no way comment on the overall satisfaction level earned by MOVA to date. I can only offer very positive feedback from my perspective. The Commissioner has shared communication, educational space, and veteran career advocacy for all veterans that I have assisted. In the last year alone, (2013) SBDCs in New York advised over 300 veterans and their qualified family members. My office has benefited by conducting over ten veteran forums promoting entrepreneurship for New York City Veterans during our association

with MOVA. This cooperation has been pivotal in job creation/ new business starts and employment in general. So, from my perspective alone, MOVA has made significant return on investment in its support of the City's Small Business Development Centers and their support of Veteran's Small Businesses.

At last estimate there are over sixty agencies/groups that are currently assisting veterans in their variety of needs. The effectiveness and reliability of these support organizations are directly proportional to their respective staffing , talent and funding levels. From healthcare to career assistance, the myriad of providers offering "help" is daunting at best. MOVA serves as a clearing house or triage for NY City Veterans/ qualifying family members in directing all inquiries to the appropriate supporting agency. It is unclear if MOVA's capacity can keep up with the demand however. What is intuitively obvious to me, as a director of one of these support organizations and as a Veteran, is the overwhelming need for an office such as MOVA. With the number of veterans growing each year, and the number of veteran related social and professional agencies on the rise, it is unthinkable for the greatest city in America not to have highly functional central operation dedicated to getting a veteran in need to the right solution-based Veteran Office/Agency/Department, etc. Reliance on the "VA" system to resolve all problems that a veteran may encounter is tantamount to malpractice. There can be a stigma attached to some Veteran Administration access. The Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs has and can continue to serve as that "Squad Leader/Section Chief/Team Leader" in offering the Veteran mentoring in a way not found elsewhere.

With all altruistic, patriotic, and ethical reasons aside for continuing this Office and even expanding its operations; *it just makes sense!* Using any economic model predicting return on investment for preventative dollars spent, it is in New York City's best fiscal interests in getting Veterans the help they need in the shortest amount of time possible. Even the most modest studies show that for every \$1 spent on prevention, there is a potential \$100 saving in the alternative. MOVA has the potential to assist as one of the most heroic and noble Veteran Salvation operations in all of America. By continuing to direct veterans to veterans groups with speed and efficiency there is a positive economic outcome to the City of New York, a higher moral need served and a national need met in a way that only the City of New York can provide."

Sincerely,



Robert J. Piechota-Director

Small Business Development Center-Brooklyn

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



June 23rd, 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.**

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 the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs.

BCC is a membership based business assistance organization, which represents the interests of over 1,700 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.

The Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) was established in 1987. MOVA advises the mayor on issues and initiatives impacting veterans and the military community. MOVA works with the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (NYSDVA), city agencies, veteran organizations and other stakeholders to offer services to veterans, their dependents and survivor; while encouraging innovative partnerships that would help ensure creative problem solving.

MOVA's current services include, assisting with veteran benefits, employment, housing/homelessness, education, health, burial and the VA home loan. However, it would be beneficial to veterans if MOVA expanded its services and provided more job training, job placement, businesses development and resources. BCC would like to suggest that MOVA be provided with the necessary funding so that it can expand its scope of services, and include some of the suggestions mentioned.

BCC would also like to recommend an upgrade to NYC veteran's benefits/preferences so that they are on par with other states. For example, the city currently does not have a veteran hiring preference like the NYSDVA does. Additionally, NYC does not have affordable housing preferences and tax waivers for veterans that the state does. BCC would also like to recommend that the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) begin tracking veteran homelessness in NYC. In doing so, we can try to tackle this problem. BCC also supports the continued funding of \$250,000 a year for MOVA's veteran benefits counselors.

Research suggests that veterans typically experience a high rate of success with business ventures, because they are accustomed to mission-oriented work environments that encourage risk and require



Careful management of personnel, capital, and resources. These are all important characteristics of a successful entrepreneur.

A targeted coordination of efforts from an economic development perspective, to include one-on-one advisement, workshops/training and access to funding resources would go a long way in providing a fertile environment for veteran entrepreneurship, job creation and workforce development.

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 has been focusing 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.

Veteran entrepreneurship provides an opportunity for New Yorkers to contribute directly to the economic development of their communities, by increasing revenue and hiring both civilians and other Veterans. The Chamber is very supportive of the creation of a separate veteran procurement program, one that would identify veteran owned businesses willing and able to perform agency contracts, and ensuring that at least 3% of the total value of annual state procurements are set aside for veterans. Effectively communicating these opportunities to this group would give veteran-owned a much needed boost.

The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee

of the **Veterans Mental Health Coalition of NYC**

Oversight: The Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs – Examining the Role of MOVA in Serving New York City's Veterans

Honorable Eric Ulrich, Chair
The Committee on Veterans

Testimony by Scott Thompson, LMHC
Director, Veterans Mental Health Coalition of New York City

June 23, 2014

The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee

The Veterans Mental Health Coalition of NYC

50 Broadway, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10004

(212) 614-5753 | sthompson@mhaofnyc.org



www.facebook.com/vmhcnyc | www.mha-nyc.org/vmhc

A project of the Mental Health Association of NYC and NAMI-NYC Metro

The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee of New York City

Good afternoon Chair Ulrich and members of the Committee, thank you for your leadership in addressing the needs of veterans and for organizing this important hearing on the role of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) in serving New York City's Veterans. My name is Scott Thompson and I am the Director of the Veterans Mental Health Coalition (VMHC) of New York City. I am also a veteran and former Army Chaplain. The Coalition, which has over 1,000 diverse members was co-founded by the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC) and NAMI-NYC Metro and promotes the mental health and well-being of New York City service members, veterans, and their families through education, information, collaboration, and promotion of a comprehensive array of services. VMHC has established a subcommittee on promoting needed policy reforms called the Veterans' Mental Health Action Committee, on whose behalf I am speaking today.

We count among New York City residents over 225,000 military veterans. As more servicemembers transition back to civilian life, this number will increase by the thousands and will require additional resources in both dollars and staffing to fill the need.

A range of coordinated services, from all levels of government, the private sector, and local civilian based providers is required for veterans and their families to successfully transition and thrive in their communities. In New York City, MOVA is the lead government body addressing veterans needs including advising the Mayor on issues impacting veterans and coordinating with other veteran serving organizations and key stakeholders to support the city's veteran community. While MOVA has a critical leadership role in confronting the needs of the city's veterans, it has lacked the funding, resources, and staffing to fully operationalize its mission.

The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee of New York City

In order for NYC to fully support and commit to addressing the needs of all veterans, it must do more. That is why the Veterans Mental Health Action Committee lends its support for recent proposed city legislation (Section 2, Chapter 75) being proposed by Council Member Ulrich that calls for MOVA to be elevated to the level of NYC Department of Veteran Affairs. With a Department dedicated to serving veterans, greater resources and funding can be secured to better overcome the complex challenges of veterans of all generations. Ideally, the Department would serve as a single stop model that would enable veterans to obtain the necessary information, resources, updates, and referrals to all of the services and benefits to which they are entitled. This would include but not be limited to Disability Compensation, Discharge Upgrades, Educational and Employment Benefits, , Membership in Vets Organizations, Acquiring Medals and Records, Behavioral health supports, Cemetery and Burial Benefits, Pension, VA and State of NY Mortgage Information, Vocational Rehabilitation and more. In addition to funding, this will require many dedicated and certified staff that is able to perform these functions. While experienced, the current staff at MOVA are not certified veteran service officers.

Furthermore, NYC veteran government leadership, whether MOVA or a Department, would do well to raise the profile of NYC's military veterans. This includes increasing awareness about their challenges, needs, as well as strengths to the general public, fellow government partners, and the private sector so that necessary resources and supports can be mounted, coordinated, and sustained.,

We believe this in an important time of transition for MOVA. With new leadership in all branches of government, there is renewed opportunity for NYC to step forward and make good on its commitment to the city's veterans.

The Veterans Mental Health Action Committee of New York City

We thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for your consideration of how to maximize and elevate this important office. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.

**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: EDWARD M. Daniels

Address: P.O. Box 776 NYC 10030

I represent: Incarcerated Veterans Consortium, Inc.

Address: P.O. Box 776 NYC 10030

**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: 6/23/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lionelle Hamanaka

Address: _____

I represent: Military Families

Address: mfs0.org

**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: 23 Jun 14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MAJ JACQUELINE TORRES

Address: 176 HERON LANE

I represent: VETERAN

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: 6-23-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Coco Chikane

Address: 123 William St.

I represent: Urban Justice Ctr Veteran Advocacy

Address: 123 William NY NY 10038

**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 LESHES

Address: 335 ADAMS

I represent: BROOKLYN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Address: _____

**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: Joseph Gnalan

Address: 265 Lafayette St Apt 7, N.Y.

I represent: VVA Chapter #126

Address: 346 Bkwy, N.Y., NY

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: _____

Name: Paul Schabert (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 175 Beach 115

I represent: Leslie Goldberg Parvet

Address: _____

**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: 25 June, 2014

Name: Rev Robert B. Farley (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 346 Broadway

I represent: Veterans Are Still Warriors Inc.

Address: 346 Broadway

**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: _____

Name: Mario Figueroa (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 427 W 125th 10052

I represent: United War Veterans Council Inc

Address: R. NY, NY 10013

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 Rowan

Address: 82-12 Jewelers Ave. M/V NY 1379

I represent: VAB / VVA

Address: _____

**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: 6/23/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: COMMISSER TERRANCE HOLLIDAY

Address: _____

I represent: MOVA

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. MOVA Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/23/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rob Picchese

Address: 25 Chapel St

I represent: Small Business Development Cn

Address: NYC Bldg of Technology

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: LEE COYINO PL SE, NY

Address: 18 CURTIS

I represent: UNITED STATES ISLAND VETERANS ORG.

Address: 198 JUSTIN CUE SE, NY 10306

**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: 6/23/2011

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAUL J. SCHOTTENHAMEL

Address: 78-36 83 ST, GLENDALE, NY 11385

I represent: QUEEN COUNTY AMERICAN LEGION

Address: _____

**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: 6/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAT GUALTIERI

Address: 346 BOWY, 107 NY 10013

I represent: UNITED WAR VETERANS COUNCIL

Address: SAME AS ABOVE

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: 6/23/14

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Ed SchLOEMAN

Address: 59 East 2 St Bklyn

I represent: DAVID LYNCH Foundation & Operation

Address: Warrior Wellness
above

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: 6/23/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ST HANCOCK

Address: 12-1 1st St

I represent: _____

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: 6/23/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jason Hansman

Address: 292 Madison Avenue; 10th Floor NY, NY 10017

I represent: Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Address: 292 Madison Avenue; 10th Fl NY, NY 10017

◆ 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: 6/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Vincent McGowan

Address: _____

I represent: Veteran Advisory Bd

Address: _____

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