

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
14th Fl.

B E F O R E:
ERIC A. ULRICH
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Fernando Cabrera
Andrew Cohen
Alan N. Maisel
Paul A. Vallone

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lisa Beatha
University Director of Veteran Affairs
CUNY Central Student Affairs

Dan McSweeney
United War Veterans Council

Dr. Amanda Spray
Psychologist
NYU Military Family Clinic

Samuel Innocent
NYC Veterans Alliance

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2 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: We're ready, sir?

3 Thank you. [gavel]

4 [background comment]

5 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Alright. Good
6 afternoon. I am Council Member Eric Ulrich, Chair of
7 the City Council Veterans Committee.

8 As thousands of veterans return from
9 active duty overseas, many will look to utilize the
10 available military higher educational benefits to
11 enroll in public and private colleges and
12 universities. Many enter these schools with strong
13 knowledge and competency gained from the intensive
14 training they received while serving in the military.
15 Providing these students with college credits based
16 on this experience helps ease the transition back to
17 civilian life by allowing veterans to expedite their
18 time for receiving their degree and into the
19 workforce. Already 26 states had enacted legislation
20 requiring state colleges and universities to give
21 veterans educational credit for their military
22 training. Today the Committee will consider Proposed
23 Resolution 329-A, sponsored by my good friend and
24 colleague, Council Member Alan Maisel of Brooklyn,
25 calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass

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2 and Governor Cuomo to sign the Veterans' Education
3 Through SUNY Credits Act, originally introduced by
4 State Senator Timothy Kennedy, that would actually
5 add New York to this list of states.

6 This important legislation would ensure
7 that the unique skills and training that student
8 veterans obtain while serving their country are
9 recognized by all SUNY and CUNY schools; it would
10 require each SUNY and CUNY school, including
11 community college, to award academic credits where
12 appropriate to enrolled student veterans for courses
13 that were part of the student's military training or
14 service; it would also ensure that no student veteran
15 would be charged for those credits that they quality
16 for based upon this experience.

17 This bill is an important step in
18 encouraging returning veterans to attend state and
19 city schools and become part of the proud tradition
20 of public higher education in the state of New York.
21 I comment Senator Kennedy for introduction this
22 legislation and the Committee looks forward to
23 hearing from CUNY, student veterans and other veteran
24 organizations about how universities and colleges can
25 attract more veterans to their campuses and ease the

2 transition from military to civilian life once they
3 are here.

4 I want to acknowledge some of my
5 colleagues and members of the Committee who have
6 joined us this after; we're joined by Council Member
7 Fernando Cabrera of the Bronx, Council Member Paul
8 Vallone of Queens and we are now going to hear
9 briefly from the sponsor of the bill, a member of
10 this Committee and a staunch advocate for veterans
11 and their families, Council Member Alan Maisel.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Thank you very
13 much, Chairman Ulrich.

14 People who were in World War II, our
15 soldiers in World War II who left the military in one
16 piece very often will tell you that when they took
17 advantage of the GI Bill that was a turning point in
18 their life, because the GI Bill was such an
19 incredible help to people to start a career after the
20 military and we owe a huge amount to the GI Bill, so
21 basically this a mini GI Bill, because it applies
22 just to New York State and as an educator myself,
23 former educator, I know that the most important thing
24 that we can do for our veterans, aside from health
25 care, which is also extremely important, is to give

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2 them the opportunity to get to school, get the
3 degrees to allow them to have very fruitful and
4 productive lives, so I think this is really a very
5 good bill and I'm really proud to sponsor it. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you, Council
8 Member Maisel. Council Member Maisel has also
9 offered his help, having served in the State
10 Assembly, to get an assembly sponsor to introduce the
11 bill and he's currently working on that... [interpose]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: I did say that,
13 yeah?

14 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Yes you did. Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: And I'm sure that he
17 will do that, so having served in the Assembly and
18 knowing the inner workings of the legislature, this
19 really is a fine piece of legislation, although the
20 Council cannot have anything to do with it directly
21 because we don't have jurisdiction, quite frankly,
22 over higher education institutions, Albany does; we
23 do wanna make sure that we're on the record
24 supporting the passage of this bill and urging Albany
25 to pass this bill so that student veterans can get

2 this help, it's very, very important; I know it's
3 important to Council Member Maisel and we're very
4 pleased to hear the bill today.

5 We're gonna hear from the University
6 Director of Veterans Affairs from CUNY first, Lisa
7 Betha [sic]. [background comment] I'm sorry,
8 Beatha; we'll ask her to take a seat at the panel. I
9 know that she's provided copies of her testimony and
10 the sergeant at arms will distribute that and we will
11 ask the Committee Counsel to [background comments]
12 administer the oath before she begins her testimony.

13 [background comments]

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell
15 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
16 in your testimony before this committee and to
17 respond honestly to Council Member questions?

18 LISA BEATHA: Yes, I do.

19 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you for
20 coming, and please begin your testimony.

21 LISA BEATHA: Good afternoon. My name is
22 Lisa Beatha and I am the University Director of
23 Veteran Affairs at CUNY Central Student Affairs and
24 I'm also a veteran of the United States Armed Forces.

2 Thank you, Chair Ulrich and members of the Veterans
3 Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

4 CUNY has over 4,000 student veterans that
5 could potentially be impacted by the Proposed
6 Resolution, No. 329, the Veterans' Education Through
7 SUNY Credits Act. CUNY understands the sacrifices
8 that our student reservists and veterans make for our
9 country; most of our service members have already
10 disrupted their lives to protect our country and
11 communities, preserving the quality of life we
12 currently enjoy today.

13 CUNY also recognizes the quality and
14 rigor of the training they received is comparable to
15 that of college credits. Prior to Obama's Executive
16 Order 13607, entitled Establishing Principles of
17 Excellence for Educational Institutions Service
18 Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members,
19 this was instituted in 2012; however, CUNY began a
20 Veterans Task Force in 2011 which recommended that
21 student veterans attending CUNY get military credit
22 for their -- get college credit, sorry, for their
23 military experience. CUNY has also continued to
24 address this issue by awarding military transfer
25 credit by passing a Board resolution in 2014.

2 The 2014 CUNY Board of Trustee policy
3 regards college credit for military service by
4 awarding up to 45 college credits at the senior
5 college level, up to 30 college credits at the
6 community college level for students who have served
7 in the military. Military credit is also reviewed by
8 all forms of the Department of Defense, for example,
9 the Joint Service Transcript is currently being
10 reviewed. CUNY also utilizes ACE, which is the
11 American Council of Education guidelines, to evaluate
12 military credit for credentials.

13 Additionally, the Central Office Director
14 of Transfer Information reviews military transfer
15 credit using those guidelines by ACE. It also
16 important to note that CUNY Central Admissions
17 provides a checklist to all prospective veterans
18 applicants, as well as the application fee waiver.
19 The checklist itself includes instructions for
20 providing a military transcript as far a straining
21 and experience after being admitted. Additionally,
22 the Central Office Director of Transfer Information
23 works with the University Registrar's Office to
24 communicate this Board of Trustee policy to all our
25 CUNY campuses.

2 In closing, I'd like to state that I was
3 also a CUNY transfer student and I had no idea in the
4 past that I could have earned transfer credit from my
5 military service; this could have saved me at least a
6 semester's worth of tuition. Several years later, in
7 2003, when I became an Assistant Registrar at the
8 College of Staten Island, I became very aware of the
9 extensive training that is needed by staff to
10 evaluate prior learning credits for student veterans.

11 In order for CUNY to effectively
12 implement this new mandate of this resolution we will
13 need resources for professional development and
14 staffing for the seamless evaluation of those
15 military transfer credits across the CUNY system.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you very much.
18 I know that there are other committees that are
19 meeting and my colleagues might have other meetings
20 to attend, so I'd ask if they have any questions I'll
21 give them the floor now before I start asking some.
22 I know Council Member Cabrera might have a few
23 questions for CUNY.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so
25 much, Mr. Chair and welcome CUNY and the highest

2 praises that I always give to CUNY for all the great
3 work that you do, and what I just heard just
4 reinforces again how you value our veterans.

5 Let me ask you this question; what's the
6 average -- you mentioned that CUNY has over 4,000
7 that could potentially be impacted by this Reso; how
8 many right now are receiving credit?

9 LISA BEATHA: That's hard to say across
10 the system, because again, this policy that CUNY did
11 put in place last years is relatively new.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So are you
13 tracking it though?

14 LISA BEATHA: We have not aggressively
15 tracked it; we are beginning to review which schools,
16 for example, John Jay and the College of Staten
17 Island, as well as New York City Tech; they have been
18 aggressively reviewing these credits... [interpose]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Is...

20 LISA BEATHA: that we are reviewing.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Is that
22 something that you're looking forward to -- a
23 directive is gonna be sent out to all the CUNYs to
24 make sure that that's being tracked? The only reason
25 why I mention it is because I think that you're ahead

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2 of the game here, compared to many other colleges, so
3 we could use it as a good case sample of what could
4 happen when this is afforded to our veterans.

5 LISA BEATHA: And it's part of the
6 President's task force, Consul of Presidents that
7 reviews some of these recommendations, and transfer
8 credit is one of the five areas.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So in the
10 colleges that you just mentioned that have been
11 tracked, do you have any data... [interpose]

12 LISA BEATHA: We can provide data later,
13 we can... [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay; that would
15 be great. And what do you estimate, in terms of
16 savings, towards the students?

17 LISA BEATHA: I would say close to a
18 semester's worth or at least 12 credits, and it would
19 vary according to the student's program.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: How do you
21 answer people who may say well you know, that they're
22 gonna be missing out on some courses that could
23 otherwise have taken; how do you...

24 LISA BEATHA: The experience that they
25 gain in the military can directly relate to what

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2 they're doing in college. For example, prerequisites
3 or even for electives; within college there are
4 always, depending upon your major, you may have
5 anywhere between 3 or 23 elective credits and you
6 should be able to get those from the military
7 experience... [crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Does CUNY have
9 any recommendations -- this is my last question --
10 Does CUNY have any recommendations as to how to make
11 this legislation better?

12 LISA BEATHA: At this point we're hoping
13 for resources, because again, we have been
14 aggressively communicating to the campuses what they
15 need to do and training is a key issue. Again,
16 because we do have transfer evaluators on every
17 campus; it's a matter of the training.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay. Thank you
19 so much. Mr. Chair... [crosstalk]

20 LISA BEATHA: You're welcome.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: appreciate it.

22 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you, Council
23 Member Cabrera. First I wanna thank you for your
24 service to our country, as we thank all veterans who
25 appear before this committee.

2 LISA BEATHA: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: You mentioned the
4 potential financial savings that veterans would
5 receive because they wouldn't have to pay for those
6 credits...

7 LISA BEATHA: Correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: and it could be a
9 semester's worth of courses and it also could help
10 them graduate earlier... [crosstalk]

11 LISA BEATHA: It could.

12 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: with a degree and
13 save them some time, or work full-time and go to
14 school part-time and still be on track to finish a
15 degree in the same amount of time that someone else
16 would be able to.

17 Why do you think 20 other states have
18 adopted policies or directives encouraging the
19 education departments there, or the Board of Regents
20 there to adopt a policy and New York has not?

21 LISA BEATHA: I'm not clear on why New
22 York hasn't, but I know that some of the states that
23 did adopt this policy, they had several military
24 bases and a high return of veterans to their cities,
25 so that made a difference.

2 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: It's just perplexing
3 to me, because New York, as we know, and Council
4 Member Vallone pointed this out just yesterday, is
5 home to more than 200,000 veterans; we have more
6 veterans that live in New York City than some states
7 have in their entire state and yet other states seem
8 to be doing so much more to help veterans transition
9 back into civilian life, including awarding academic
10 credits for military service and New York is still
11 not one of them and the fact that we kinda leave it
12 up to individual institutions or colleges, even in
13 the public higher education system, really doesn't
14 make any sense to me or to the sponsor of the bill,
15 Council Member Maisel; I mentioned he served in the
16 Assembly in Albany; we're really hoping, before the
17 session is over, that Albany takes a closer look at
18 this issue because it really is important.

19 LISA BEATHA: It is, and it is pretty
20 complex as well, it varies based on branches or what
21 the particular service member would like to major in
22 as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Well I do think that
24 the Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees at the
25 CUNY and SUNY level can certainly set a baseline even

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2 for courses or waiving prerequisite courses for
3 certain requirements. I mean there's a whole host of
4 things that they can do to make it a uniform
5 approach; that's what people in the military, as you
6 know, are used to...

7 LISA BEATHA: Right; that's correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: you know uniformity
9 and a process and the fact that it kinda varies from
10 place to place...

11 LISA BEATHA: And we have been trying
12 across the board and again, it's difficult depending
13 upon the college or community vs. senior colleges as
14 well... [interpose]

15 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Veterans are in
16 every CUNY school in the state; I know that they're
17 there, you know that they're there; we owe it to them
18 to try to do everything that we can to help them.
19 We're so appreciative that CUNY is doing its part to
20 kind of lead the way, but it's imperative that
21 Albany... [interpose]

22 LISA BEATHA: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: step in at this
24 point and provide some direction for SUNY and CUNY.

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2 Council Member Vallone might wanna add, I think
3 [sic]... [crosstalk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Mr. Chair, just...
5 just quick -- you just mentioned it's difficult, so
6 what do you find is the biggest obstacle? Thank you,
7 Mr. Chair.

8 LISA BEATHA: The learning curve; again,
9 transfer credit just on its own is difficult to
10 evaluate, especially coming from a non-CUNY
11 institution; we have had other hurdles with that,
12 much less with the military. However, it's becoming
13 more simplified with the American Council of
14 Education stepping in and helping with reviewing
15 credentials; their website gives more information and
16 details about the courses that every service member
17 has taken. So again, it's just filling those gaps,
18 because some of these conversations only started a
19 year-and-a-half ago, after the Executive Order by
20 Obama.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: So it sounds
22 positive; maybe just more of a timeframe involved you
23 think?

24 LISA BEATHA: It's timing and again, more
25 continuing the conversation and CUNY again is

2 actively pursuing this, not just college credit, but
3 also employment and streamlining the veteran's
4 experience to college.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: That would be a
6 wonderful, wonderful success for CUNY and for our
7 veterans, so thank you for that.

8 LISA BEATHA: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Okay, thank you for
10 your testimony; we really appreciate you being here
11 today and please send our regards to...

12 LISA BEATHA: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: your colleagues at
14 CUNY.

15 New panel, we are gonna hear from Dan
16 McSweeney, representing United War Veterans Council,
17 Dr. Amanda Spray... Spray... how do you want me to say
18 that? [background comment] Spray? Okay, from NYU
19 Military Family Clinic, doing great work there, and
20 Samuel Innocent, representing and speaking on behalf
21 of New York City Veterans Alliance. We'll ask them
22 to take the witness stand and the clerk will
23 administer the oath.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can you raise your
25 right hand, please? Do you affirm to tell the truth,

2 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your
3 testimony before this committee and to respond
4 honestly to Council Member questions?

5 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Okay, thank you.

6 We'll start with Dan and we'll work our way down.
7 Thank you.

8 DAN MCSWEENEY: Thanks very much... Thanks
9 very much, Chair Ulrich and Councilman Vallone;
10 certainly appreciate the opportunity to be here.
11 Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today
12 regarding the City Council's proposed proclamation in
13 support of the Veterans' Education Through SUNY
14 Credits Act. I'll be very brief in offering three
15 points that support this proclamation in the relevant
16 proposed legislation.

17 First off, it's an increasingly common
18 practice for institutions of higher education in the
19 United States to offer course credits for life
20 experience. The majority of states, as we've heard,
21 already offer veterans' credit through their public
22 colleges and universities and SUNY absolutely should
23 follow suit; supporting the proposed legislation is
24 the fair thing to do. Secondly, the standards of
25 training and education throughout the armed services

2 are quite impressive; in some cases surpassing norms
3 found in higher education in American academia; I
4 have seen this firsthand through my service with
5 enlisted marines with intelligence, sophistication
6 and preparation to match those I saw in many of my
7 undergraduate college courses; supporting the
8 proposed legislation is therefore the honest thing to
9 do.

10 Finally, offering veterans a leg up by
11 recognizing their significant preparation while in
12 uniform will promote their continued service and
13 leadership as they enter the working world and settle
14 into the local communities here in New York, so
15 supporting this proposed legislation is the
16 beneficial thing to do.

17 In sum, I offer enthusiastic support for
18 the Veterans' Education Through SUNY Credits Act and
19 the United War Veterans Council stands ready to
20 assist in whatever ways we can. The post 9/11
21 veterans who attend our Vietnam Veterans
22 Commemoration event on March 28th to honor that
23 generation's service and sacrifices are living proof
24 of why this proposal is sensible and necessary.
25 Thank you for your attention.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you.

3 Dr. Spay.

4 DR. AMANDA SPRAY: Thank you. I will
5 keep this brief because I think the support is very
6 clear from all of us.

7 My name is Dr. Amanda Spray; I'm a
8 psychologist at the NYU Military Family Clinic, where
9 we provide high-quality mental health treatment
10 accessible to veterans and their entire family. We
11 focus very strongly on the whole patient, which
12 includes beyond their mental health symptoms, to
13 include their overall quality of life. This quality
14 of life is affected by their relationships with
15 family members and friends, leisure activities,
16 career and educational goals, as these factors are
17 critically important to the mental health of an
18 individual.

19 Research indicates that education has a
20 significant positive impact on one's mental health
21 and can serve as protective factor in dealing with
22 stress and adversity. Military personnel learn
23 significant skills in their training and service and
24 it's our duty as civilians to recognize these
25 individuals as possessing an education.

2 As we heard from CUNY earlier, they are
3 already accepting such credits for military
4 experience; however, it's quite clear that we're
5 lagging behind. It is essential to make New York a
6 veteran-friendly state by passing this resolution.
7 By passing a statewide mandate, New York is
8 communicating the importance of education and
9 recognition of and respect for a veteran or active
10 duty service man or woman's service. It demonstrates
11 societal support by giving college credit in the
12 civilian domain for skills learned in the military
13 domain. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Okay, now the
15 Veterans Alliance and then we'll have questions for
16 the panel after.

17 SAMUEL INNOCENT: Good afternoon,
18 Chairman Ulrich; Council Member Vallone. My name is
19 Samuel Innocent and I represent a newly formed
20 grassroots organization called The New York City
21 Alliance. I'm a former Army medic of seven years and
22 a proud veteran. I currently work for the City
23 University of New York in the Office of Veterans
24 Affairs, but today I testify not on behalf of the
25 City University of New York but on behalf of student

2 veterans within the CUNY system, current and future
3 veterans who deserve have their military education
4 and work experience count towards their academic
5 endeavors.

6 There are currently 2,784 veterans in the
7 CUNY system who are tracked as veterans; when we
8 estimate those who are not being tracked for any
9 different number of reasons, that number increases to
10 3-4,000 plus veterans. Of this body of student
11 veterans, the median age is 27; while I cannot tell
12 the story of each and every one of these veterans, I
13 can tell my own and hope that it will emphasize why
14 veterans in the public school systems of New York
15 deserve credit for their military education and work
16 experience.

17 I came to the City College of New York, a
18 CUNY school, in January of 2011 following the
19 completion of my term of active duty; though I had an
20 associate's degree and 70 plus credits from Jefferson
21 Community College, a SUNY school, only 34 of those
22 credits counted towards my academic records at CUNY;
23 of these 34 credits, none of them were from the
24 military, they all came from night classes that I
25 attended at Jefferson Community College after my

2 military workday. Jefferson Community College, given
3 its close proximity to Fort Drum and understanding of
4 the military, granted me about 30 credits for my
5 military education in the medical field. As a
6 nationally certified EMT, Jefferson Community College
7 gave me credit for all the medical courses that they
8 recognized that were equivalent to those that they
9 offered while City College did not, even though City
10 College offered equivalent curriculum through their
11 continuing and educational and professional studies
12 programs.

13 This began my two-year journey of
14 advocacy at the City College of New York to persuade
15 the administration to evaluate all military
16 transcripts and award credit where credit was due.
17 After two years of meetings, petitions and advocacy,
18 the student veterans at City College and I succeeded
19 in getting the school to evaluate military
20 transcripts for credit and to allow for early
21 registration in order for veterans to maximize their
22 benefits within the time that they are allotted by
23 the GI Bill. This was a win, but it should not have
24 been a struggle and it should apply to all public
25 colleges statewide.

2 The final part of my personal experience
3 does not speak to the end of my journey, but rather
4 the beginning. When exiting the military I applied
5 for reciprocity in order to change my national EMT
6 license to a New York State EMT license so that I
7 would be able to work part-time while in school. I
8 served as a combat medic on foot patrols and in
9 clinics in Afghanistan, taking care of soldiers on
10 the battlefield and I also served stateside in
11 military hospitals at Fort Drum and at West Point. I
12 am thankful that New York State granted me
13 reciprocity for my experience and it lasted two
14 years.

15 I ask of the higher education
16 representatives present today if New York State saw
17 fit to grant me a professional license for my
18 military coursework, certifications and experience,
19 why can't our academic institutions do the same?

20 In closing, passing this legislation
21 would not only ease the transition for veterans into
22 academia and into their civilian lives, but it would
23 also begin to provide a baseline standard of how we
24 value the years of service and professionalism these
25 young men and women have given not only to the State

2 of New York, but to their country. We cannot give
3 them back the years in which they were young and
4 without much obligation, the years in which they were
5 free to take risks; they have spent those years in
6 service to us; we should show them that those years
7 were precious to us also. On behalf of the New York
8 City Veterans Alliance I thank you for the
9 opportunity to speak today; pending your questions,
10 this concludes my testimony.

11 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you so much
12 for your testimony; really powerful story. Again,
13 thank you for your service to our country. I thought
14 you were gonna say for a second that the state would
15 not grant you reciprocity, at which point we would've
16 been having another hearing next month, but we're
17 grateful that that did in fact happen. But your
18 story really is emblematic and symbolic of a lot of
19 other stories of military veterans, many of whom
20 happen to be female veterans; many of whom happen to
21 have served in combat, post 9/11 vets; many of whom
22 are enrolled in SUNY and CUNY schools; some of whom
23 have families, children, other obligations in their
24 lives. This legislation if passed would
25 significantly benefit them in a way that really is

2 significant. So I wanna thank you for sharing your
3 story; I wanna thank you for serving our country, but
4 if you wanna know what you can do to help get this
5 bill passed in Albany, it would be to lobby members
6 of the legislature to sign on as co-sponsors, to have
7 veterans and members that are part of your alliance
8 call their local representatives to say hey, I heard
9 about this bill up in Albany and I'd like to know why
10 my assembly person or my state senator is not signed
11 on as a co-sponsor yet. Elected officials are
12 responsive to their constituents; when they receive a
13 call from someone in their district urging them to
14 sign onto a bill to help veterans, nine out of ten
15 times they're gonna agree to do it; the more co-
16 sponsors you have on the bill, the better chance it
17 has to pass; the more pressure that we can put, as a
18 City Council body on Albany to pass a bill, whether
19 through a resolution or a home bill measure, that's
20 how we do our part to advocate on behalf of veterans
21 and to urge Albany to act on an important issue. But
22 advocates and people like yourself are in a unique
23 position of having your own constituency of veterans,
24 clients and other people that you service and I would
25 strongly urge you to get them onboard to contact

2 their own elected officials in Albany to build steam
3 and momentum and support for this legislation so that
4 we can see it passed. Council Member Vallone.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Just quick; I
6 mean the Chairman summed it up, Dan, Dr. Spray,
7 Samuel, we always thank you for your testimony and
8 your passionate and personal story, Samuel, is
9 exactly, seven years of service, what not only this
10 city and the state needs to hear, but everyone needs
11 to hear, 'cause that's how it happens and you saw us
12 talking while he were talking; we were excited; that
13 gets the passion and the energy going and then
14 everyone in the room feels that. So thank you, you
15 know your story drives a perfect example of what the
16 impact of this resolution and legislation would mean,
17 and it really is something that needs to happen and
18 CUNY's words were great; I mean and moving ahead and
19 they're looking forward and that's the whole purpose
20 of sometimes these hearings; that just spurs it on,
21 'cause people know the hearing's coming, they prepare
22 for it, they're ready for it; we hear their
23 testimony. So thank you very much, Dr. Spray and
24 Dan, as always, we thank you too.

25 [background comment]

2 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: So I have just a few
3 questions before we wrap up, and perhaps
4 Mr. Innocent, you can answer this, or Dr. Spray; what
5 military skills and experiences do you believe best
6 lend themselves to the provision college credit, you
7 know what specific skills or training do people in
8 the military receive that we could easily translate
9 into college credits; what remedial courses, what
10 basic courses, what advance courses do you think
11 would be commensurate with the military service that
12 people have earned or performed during their military
13 career; so do you have any ideas or suggestions?

14 [background comments]

15 SAMUEL INNOCENT: It's a complicated
16 answer, but one that I'll try to provide nonetheless.
17 It really goes according to what your profession was
18 in the military and that will automatically,
19 according to what your military transcript says, kind
20 of translate into whatever the institution of
21 academia would grant. But if I were to say there was
22 a baseline amount of credits, if we were to try an
23 establish in a base, I would say according to the
24 rank that you achieved while in the military, you
25 have to go to particular professional schools in

2 order to receive the next rank and the very first one
3 in the army, so I can speak to my personal
4 experience, was a course called The Warrior Leader
5 Course, where we learned about management of
6 personnel and resources. So in these classes we
7 learned how to write -- and it's in a military style
8 of course, because that's our profession; that is
9 what we do, for how to write operation orders, which
10 would easily translate into a write resource course
11 101, 'cause you learn the breakdown of the style and
12 the format that you have to turn in this paperwork in
13 order to have the mission approved and to continue
14 forward and you're turning in this paperwork and
15 these documents to captains, majors, generals even,
16 depending on where you work and who you are attached
17 to, I would say, in your military experience, and
18 then so on and so forth. So there's a very basic,
19 basic and if you've done three months in the
20 military, physical education is almost a no-brainer
21 and then it goes on from there, to management and
22 training and then in your particular fields; for
23 instance, myself, I was a medic; I had to take
24 advance courses in the medical field in order to
25 receive my Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certificate.

2 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: So there might be
3 basic science or biology courses that would be
4 commensurate with some of the things that you've
5 learned in the military?

6 SAMUEL INNOCENT: Yes, sir.

7 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Yeah. You know I
8 also thought of on the train ride over here today, on
9 the subway, I thought of my own great-grandfather,
10 who's 93, who served as an MP in the army during
11 World War II; you know, had he decided to go to John
12 Jay and pursue a degree in criminal justice, I'm sure
13 that there are basic courses there that lend
14 themselves to the same experiences that people like
15 him had to go through and learn in the military that
16 could save him and people like him money and time and
17 it's probably stuff he already knows, so that's just
18 another example; I know that a lot of people go into
19 the automotive roles in the military and there's a
20 lot of courses at CUNY and SUNY that are also
21 commensurate with that, so there are a lot of areas;
22 I guess, as you suggested, it really depends on what
23 their interest is, what type of degree they wanna get
24 and then how that fits best with their military
25 service; in some cases they might qualify for 15

2 credits, in some cases they might only qualify for 5
3 or 3, but the fact that some colleges offer it and
4 some don't I really is an injustice to our veterans;
5 many of whom happen to be women and people of color,
6 especially the post 9/11 vets in New York City who
7 are just struggling to get back into civilian life,
8 so I think we really owe it to them and all veterans
9 to give them all the help that they deserve, so Did
10 anybody wanna add anything, Dr. Spray...? [crosstalk]

11 DR. AMANDA SPRAY: I just want to
12 emphasize the leadership that you brought up, the
13 leadership and the management skills. So many of our
14 clients come in with such a high level of leadership
15 and management from their military experience alone
16 and I think that's something that is difficult to
17 teach in the classroom, but there are classes
18 tailored towards that, so I think that would lend
19 itself quite nicely, especially in business school.

20 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: I think that's
21 what's so frustrating for veterans is that they're
22 extremely competent, they're used to structure and
23 order and uniformity and then they have to deal with
24 a big bureaucracy, like the City or the VA or like
25 CUNY or SUNY because it's so big that sometimes just

2 don't make sense to them because they're not used to
3 it, right, so that's why we've gotta cut through the
4 red tape and try to help them. Dan; did you wanna
5 add anything before we... [crosstalk]

6 DAN MCSWEENEY: Yeah, I'd just like to
7 weigh in; having served in a marine expeditionary
8 unit, which is essentially 2,300 marines on three
9 ships, it's basically a microcosm of society at
10 large, so the educational levels that are required to
11 make this a cohesive unit and make it operational
12 overseas or in the United States absolutely lend
13 themselves to certain levels of education on the
14 civilian side and that's on the technical piece,
15 which is everything from IT to radar, vehicle
16 maintenance, etc. to the humanity side with our
17 intelligence analysts who have to understand the
18 culture, the geography, even the language of the
19 places that we're operating in, so there's no doubt
20 in my mind that all of that training, which is
21 formalized and which is assessed, could easily be
22 translated into a whole variety across the spectrum
23 of higher education requirements; there's absolutely
24 no doubt about that.

2 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Semper Fi. You know
3 my brother just enlisted with the marines; I think
4 you know that, he's going to San Diego in a few
5 months, and we're very proud of him and all of our
6 marines and all the members of our services. I think
7 someone brought up a very important point though; is
8 that New York is not the most veteran-friendly city
9 or state and we really should be; there is so much
10 more that we can do, there's always more that we can
11 do to make New York more enticing and more attractive
12 to veterans and their families to come back to New
13 York, to live here, to work here, to buy a home or a
14 condo or live here, to raise their own families here;
15 the fact that other states do so much more for
16 veterans and their families and we do not I think
17 should be something that motivates us to do more for
18 veterans; the fact that they can come back from
19 active military service and go to other states and
20 get educational credits, and that's not always the
21 case here, it's not right, you know so we have to do
22 something about it; fortunately we can't; if we
23 could, we would, we would pass the bill today, but we
24 need Albany to do that and that's why we're here
25 today.

2 Before I wrap up I'm gonna ask; anybody
3 else have any other questions? [background comment]
4 We wanna thank you for your testimony and everyone
5 who came out to today's hearing and god bless our
6 troops. Thank you very much.

7 [background comments]

8 [gavel]

9 [background comments]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date March 30, 2015