

*Testimony of Nathan D. Tomcik, Ph.D. : Representing the Ohio Psychological Association in support of S.C.R. No. 16*

I am Dr. Nathan Tomcik, a clinical psychologist employed with the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Columbus VA Ambulatory Care center. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Ohio Psychological Association in support of S.C.R. No 16. The Ohio Psychological Association, founded in 1949, is the largest professional association for psychologists in the state of Ohio with over 2,000 members. The Ohio Psychological Association urges the passage of S.C.R. No 16. This resolution affirms that comprehensive mental health treatment for our nation's Veterans is an imperative, and necessary to fulfill the promise made by Abraham Lincoln "to care for him who shall have borne the battle..."

Too many of our nation's Veterans return home not to solace and comfort as they had hoped but instead to find that the battle has just begun. The National Center for PTSD estimates that at least 20% of Veterans deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan will develop symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, more will have symptoms of depression, yet only half will receive treatment. Between 2003 and the end of FY 2011 nearly a quarter of a million Veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts were treated by the VA for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Many struggle with the compounding problems of depression, suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and traumatic brain injury. This number is staggering when you consider that only half of all eligible Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans enroll for treatment at the VA. While a high number of Veterans are effected by the lingering costs of war, consider that for every Veteran who struggles with PTSD, or other combat related problems, it is an entire family that suffers.

I am here today to implore you to pass S.C.R. No 16 because I have witnessed not only the horror that it is to live with PTSD but also the exquisite bravery that is found in recovery. I can tell you with great certainty: treatment works. Every VA in Ohio and across the country is required to have Psychologists and other mental health providers who are trained to deliver only the most effective treatments available for PTSD. VA's across the country are in the process of continuing to train and re-train it's clinicians in the most cutting edge approaches to treating PTSD including the evidence based psychotherapies, Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure. These treatments are effective as nearly 70% of Veterans who undergo these treatments no longer meet DSM-IV Criteria for PTSD.

To live with PTSD is to live with incredible pain, I tell you this because with the treatments we have available there is ample cause for hope and hope is the only reason any of us tolerate pain. I also tell you this because I know that we can help our Veterans but we need you to urge congress to continue to support the comprehensive provision of mental health care to our returning men and women. In my work at the VA I am routinely humbled by the courage these men and women demonstrate as they face their recovery and reclaim their lives. They have honored us with their service, please honor them in return. Thank you for your time.