

## STATEMENT OF DANIEL DEANS

CHRIS MAYNOR / CO-OWNER  
BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WITH RESPECT TO  
*“Veterans Serving Veterans: The Impact of America’s Businesses on  
Veteran Employment and Opportunity.”*

WASHINGTON, D.C.

November 7, 2023

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity today to provide my remarks on this critical issue.

As a fifteen-year Army Combat Infantry Veteran, with three tours to Iraq, I never imagined myself opening a small business. For a significant part of my life, I had the terrific opportunity of relying on my fellow comrades for support. My life changed once I got out of the service, transferring from military life to civilian life. I did not have a meaning for my life. If it were not for family and friends, I might have been one of those 22 veterans a day we lose to the evil side. When you leave the service, you feel like you've lost that significant purpose you had in the military. After returning from my third and final tour in Iraq, many of my friends and family had already started their successful lives, leaving me wondering where to begin with mine. I worked a few side jobs over the next couple of years but still felt like I had more to offer. In 2017, I married my wife, and she showed me that I DID HAVE a purpose and the drive to succeed, not only for myself and my family but also for my fellow comrades.

I started back to school at John A. Logan College receiving my degree in Heating and Air in 2018. I worked for an amazing small business for almost 5 years. I figured out quickly that I was working a job that wasn't fit for my stress level and still not doing what I knew I was passionate about. At the same time, I became an active member in the local VFW. I moved all the way up in the chairs and became District Commander. About that same time, I took a job at John A. Logan College in the Heating and Air Department. I have worked there for almost two years now on second shift. So, between using my vacation and sick time for days off for PTSD reasons, and days for VFW events, helping fight for my fellow veterans' benefits, I had NO time for my family and 5 children.

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I mentioned many times to my wife that I would like to open a men's clothing store. I figured if I opened my own business and was having a difficult day with my PTSD, I wouldn't risk losing my job taking more time off. Finally, after some more convincing, my wife agreed it was time to start our own small business, a men's clothing store named Daniel Deans, a tribute to my father who recently passed, also a veteran.

We wanted to open a store that offered a variety of men's clothing along with accessories like Hurricane Marsh and BURLEBO. We aimed to create a place where men could physically interact with the items, try them on, and be a local presence in our community. We quickly learned its no walk in the park starting up your own business. With all of my struggles (TBI and PTSD), the challenge was left to my co-owner and lovely wife. She had multiple hour-long phone calls, countless emails back and forth with different companies and searching websites claiming to have the knowledge for Veterans starting a small business and help with funding and different grants. With not understanding any of the rules and regulations of all these programs it became difficult to try and figure out if we even qualify for any of them. One company even told us over the phone to just look over the website, it was all there for us to read. We just stopped trying at that point and had to proceed with opening the business on our own and out of our own pocket putting ourselves in debt.

Once we started reaching out to different companies, some of which are also Veteran owned businesses, we learned that some allow you to pay overtime for product/inventory and will give any advice they have on opening a small business. There is such a high demand for Veterans trying to move forward in life and become business owners. They are trying to find that "new purpose" in life after the military. A lot of these companies do not have a voice behind them, a co-owner like I do, to help with these websites and search for all the different grants offered. Most start-ups will just give up like we did and try their best to move forward and hope for success.

Years ago, there used to be more service officers that knew everything there was to know about Veteran benefits. Maybe if we took things back to those times and focused on getting more service officers out there helping other Veterans, we might have more Veteran owned businesses. If we develop something for Veterans to help other Veterans, we might get a better turn out. I believe civilians do care about Veterans, but they do not understand the bond of a Veteran taking care of another Veteran. There is no other brotherhood, or sisterhood stronger.

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Veteran service officers are under paid and over worked and as a result, the reason we don't have many left.

If we must keep all the resources for grants and funding opportunities on a website, I would like to recommend it be developed and presented in the way we say in the military: KISS (Keep it simple stupid). A user-friendly website with three buttons: Veterans, Disabled Veterans, and Women Veterans. The user could easily click their category, fill out the application paperwork and apply for grants and funding automatically.

I am extremely thankful for everyone that has helped us along the way as we opened our small business. We appreciate your time today, giving me the opportunity to further discuss the struggles of trying to open a Veteran Owned business.

Thank you,

**Chris Maynor / Co-owner Daniel Deans, Murphysboro Illinois**

Chairman Bost, this concludes my testimony. Again, thank you and Ranking Member Takano for the opportunity to testify on this important issue before the committee. I am prepared to take any questions you or the committee members may have.