

# Written Testimony of Jonathan Michael Lubecky House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Health Hearing on “Emerging Therapies: Breakthroughs in the Battle Against Suicide

## Written Testimony

My name is Jonathan Lubecky, and I am an American Veteran. I served four years in the Marines, and upon seeing the Towers fall I joined the North Carolina Army National Guard. I served in Iraq 2005-2006 with Bravo Battery, 5th/113th FA and was medically retired in 2009 after a total of 12 years service.

As a Veteran, I have the privilege to have my trauma be socially acceptable, unlike so many others, because it is easily understood why a Veteran who deployed, whose base was shelled almost daily would have PTSD. As someone who frequently shares their story publicly, I fully understand why many chose not to share such intimately personal details of their trauma.

Most of my story is shared by hundreds of thousands of Veterans. I am but one voice of many. I grew up in a house where my siblings were abused. Where one of my siblings suffered from addiction. Like so many, I left for boot camp because I wanted to help people, and to escape.

After all I saw, and experienced in Iraq had cracked my mental health, I returned home to find my house empty, my dog gone, and my wife living with someone else. So in the early hours of Christmas morning 2006, less than two months after returning home, after going to Sacred Heart Church in Raleigh and being turned away because they were full. Going to Womack Army Medical Center and being told to “come back after the holidays” and I was sent home. I did what 136 Americans, including Veterans, did. I tried to end my life. I put a gun to my head and pulled the trigger. I will forever remember the peace I felt as the hammer fell, because it would all be over. At last. I heard the pop, I thought I was dead, but the pain was still there. It was then that I realized the ammo malfunctioned.

That was the first of 5 suicide attempts that should have been successful. That doesn't include the daily ideation, the hundreds of times I stood on a bridge. Following my last attempt, I was passed a note from an MUSC Intern that said “Google MDMA PTSD”, and I did. I discovered that MAPS PBC was conducting a clinical trial in Mt Pleasant, SC just across the bridge. I was the 26th person in a 25 person study of Veterans & First Responders. I was able to participate because someone else was healed after 1-2 sessions, and declined further treatment, so it could be expanded to include me. I went through a clinical trial lasting about 4 months. I took MDMA and sat with trained therapists for 8 hrs only three times. To be clear, I have only taken MDMA three times in my life, 9 years ago.

The MDMA doesn't fix anything. Like Anesthesia, it puts the mind, body and spirit in the place it needs to be so the therapy can work. Much like when I was given fentanyl, prior to my back surgery, the anesthesia didn't fix my back, the surgeon did. For the first time I was able to freely talk about my demons, without my body betraying me. And with the

help of Michael and Annie Mithoefer I not only worked through my trauma from Iraq, but my whole life, and excised those demons, for good.

The VA in their formulary currently has exceptionally powerful drugs such as Ketamine, Fentanyl, and long list used as anesthesia that the VA has been able to properly handle and use in a medical environment. MDMA- Assisted therapy is the same, and likely objectively safer than many of those drugs.

And through a guiding hand, I have been placed in circumstances where if I was not healed, I would crack.

For example, attempting to rescue a drowning victim in my backyard, attempting to save a gunshot victim in Charleston, and most recently providing humanitarian aid on the front lines of the Ukraine/Russia war.

I am not special. My story is the same as every other Veteran suffering with PTSD, my story changes because I went through MDMA Assisted Therapy. I was blessed by being able to participate in a clinical trial. Most Veterans face the choice of leaving the country that sent them to war, the country they love, and have shown they will die for, so they can heal, because otherwise they will sacrifice their life for this great country far from a battlefield, at home, alone, in the dark.

Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions (or VETS) provides scholarships to do just this. VETS receives thousands of applications annually, and can only send 230-250 people per year. They specifically focus only on Special Operations Personnel. So far they've helped almost 1,000 Special Operators get access to psychedelic treatments, and 100% of those surveyed say they'd recommend the treatment to other veterans. The only entity that can ensure that ALL Veterans have access to the same treatment I went through in a safe and effective manner, with trained therapists and medicinal grade substances, is the VA.

I measure my failures by a list of people I know who have committed suicide. It hangs on my fridge. We as a Nation have left these Veterans to suffer, we have left them behind. It is beyond time for this country to mean it when they say “we don’t leave anyone behind” and ensure that there are more sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, and fewer loved ones left with nothing but a folded flag, because I know that the sole reason my son has a father instead of a folded flag is because I went through MDMA Assisted therapy. Every Veteran who is suffering from PTSD and is at risk of suicide should have access to the treatment I received by going to the VA. I vehemently oppose the idea that you can achieve the same results that I did by removing the therapeutic component, and using untested and potentially lethally tainted drugs. Veterans have earned the right to heal, by doing what this august body asked them to do, it is unconscionable to prohibit research given where the science and evidence currently sits.

Every time I made the choice to end my life it was because I had lost all hope of a better day. Hope of a day like I now have everyday. Because I share my story publicly, I often have Veterans reach out begging for help, for access to the treatment I went through that saved my life. I am now begging the Veterans on this committee, and for the whole of Congress to please, give them hope of a better day, we all know it won't be tomorrow, but I beg for you to give them hope of some day.

I thank you for this opportunity and stand ready to answer any questions.

## Biography

Jonathan M. Lubecky, U.S. Army SGT(R) , is the founder of Lubecky Strategic Direction, Legislative Director for Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions, and VP Communications at Apollo Pact. He is a 12-year retiree of the U.S. Armed Forces, serving in

both the Marine Corps and the Army. He has been a freelance journalist since 2014. Since 2016 he has been a Strategic Communications & Governmental Affairs Consultant advocating for psychedelic medicine and Veterans. Jonathan returned from a deployment to Iraq in 2006. Shortly after returning, he was diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a traumatic brain injury. While battling PTSD, enduring multiple forms of treatment, and taking dozens of pills per day to manage symptoms, he attempted to take his life five times. While recovering from that fifth attempt in the hospital, he was surreptitiously instructed to “Google MDMA PTSD”. Beginning exactly 8 years after being released from active duty from Iraq, Jonathan began MDMA-assisted therapy in a MAPS Phase 2 study and completed the protocol in early 2015. **As of November 22, 2022 he has been healed of PTSD as long as he had PTSD**

Jon was appointed the National Veterans Director for the Rand Paul for President campaign. Realizing the potential of psychedelic medicine to heal his fellow veterans and the millions of Americans suffering as he once did, he has been involved in media, politics, and government affairs, with a focus on the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Media ever since receiving MDMA therapy. Jonathan graduated with honors from The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, as a Veteran Day Student. He has a bachelor’s in political science with a concentration in international politics and military affairs with a minor in intelligence analysis. He is based in Washington DC