

I'm Missy Jarrott, of Savannah, Georgia, and the Mother of Landon Holcomb, who tragically lost his life ten months ago. I'm very grateful for your invitation to share my son's story which is condensed due to limited time.

Thank you Chairwoman, Miller-Meeks, and Ranking Member Brownley, and all of the members attending today.

"If soldiers are going to die, it needs to be at the attempt of an enemy, NOT a lack of effort and unorganized antics by the VA. The VA is killing our soldiers"

My son, Landon, who served as an Air Traffic Controller Navy Veteran (NAS Jacksonville) several years ago, was struggling to find mental health help in a system that completely failed him. Like many Veterans, he reached out to the VA for help and support. His first consultation with a Provider was on December 4, 2023, however the VA did not provide a follow-up visit until April 10, 2024. Landon had scheduled visits between this timeframe, however, unfortunately, the VA canceled multiple visits denying him the chance to see a Provider who specialized in medicine management. Landon tried and tried to keep his head up that the VA would follow through. He was experiencing anxiety, insomnia, restlessness and mood swings. Landon knew that he needed a mood stabilizer. "Mom, I'm struggling." After four unsuccessful months, he began to unravel with all of the canceled appointments. He became hopeless in the System. He was very emotional. On April 10, he visited the Savannah VA Mental Health team who determined that he wasn't under distress. Landon said the visit was a "checklist", and he explained that he had been asking for a psychiatrist (medicine management). He was hoping for a better outcome and knew that this meant another delay in getting the help he critically needed.

"Those that smile the brightest might be fighting a war within". Landon was fighting.

He came by to see me after this visit. At this point, family and friends became involved in searching for a psychiatrist and to no avail. We took it upon ourselves to call psychiatrists in the Savannah, Bluffton and Hilton Head SC areas. They did not accept military insurance, take new patients or charged \$300/hr. More stress. Landon made numerous calls himself. (Play **VOICEMAIL** here) On April 19, he received a call from the Charleston VA for a Zoom appt scheduled for May 3. He did not make that appointment and passed away on May 2. **The unthinkable happened.** Landon was found in the restroom of a restaurant on Hilton Head Island. He had fentanyl in his system. To numb his pain, he thought he was taking oxys. Landon did not plan to leave us! He was not suicidal. The hopelessness of canceled appointments, feeling abandoned and not taken seriously and the emotional spiraling ended his life.

Landon was buried at the Beaufort National Cemetery in SC with U.S. Naval Honors on May 13. He leaves behind two beautiful teenagers, a loving family and many loving friends. He was a True Patriot who loved his country. Help just didn't come soon enough. Mental health is real. It can't wait! *All Landon asked for was a mental health appointment for medicine management. He raised his hand over and over.*

In memory of my 39 year old son who could "light up a room with his infectious smile", let his voice "be heard from Heaven above" and on behalf of the Veterans who struggle every day....let's be reminded to "Never leave a soldier behind". These are our children. This is why I'm here today.

How many more testimonies is it going to take "for change". How many?

May God bless our military serving all over the world and may God bless our Veterans and all military families.