

Written Testimony of

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Thank you, Chairman Arrington and Ranking Member O'Rourke for inviting me to testify today on "Hiring and Retaining Veterans for the Modern Day Work Force." My name is Robert Douthit. I am the Executive Director of Dell EMC Customer Solution Centers for the Americas and a 20 year United State Army Veteran. I am honored to appear before you today to discuss how more of our former military men and women can be hired, integrated and retained by civilian workforce employers.

The U.S. Department of Defense was one of Dell's first customers and so we have a long tradition of working for and identifying with the United States Military. We appreciate the skills that veterans can bring to our business. At Dell, we help our customers define an objective. We help them identify, develop, and evaluate options to accomplish that objective, and once an option is selected to meet that objective, we focus relentlessly on execution of the option or mission to meet the objective just as every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coast Guardsman is trained to do. So at Dell, veterans are a value-add to our workforce.

My testimony today has three objectives:

- 1) To explain why Dell is a vigorous recruiter of veterans and their spouses;
- 2) To explain how we recruit veterans and their spouses; and
- 3) To offer some suggestions as to how the federal government can strengthen military Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) and sharpen existing programs to enhance veteran hiring.

Dell stands ready to help ensure that America's veterans can seamlessly transition to the civilian workforce and begin serving their country in a different capacity or to immerse themselves in one of our many information and data technology businesses.

### **Why Dell Recruits Veterans and Their Spouses**

- I have already noted that Dell's culture aligns with the competencies of veterans' with a keen focus on execution
- The military provides a rich source of talent, especially in key areas of worker under-representation and we believe that a diverse workforce is a dynamically effective workforce
- Approximately 46% of all active duty personnel are near our key market locations

- A 2017 Student Veterans Research Brief found that when compared to their peers, student veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill *represent the single best source of potential and current achievers in higher education, with nearly 100,000 now graduating annually, and that nearly 1.1 million student veterans are in higher education right now,* and
- Finally, a 2017 Blue Star Families survey found that 28% of military spouses are unemployed and 55% military spouses state that they are underemployed. Dell would like to lower those statistics.

Dell's Veterans & Supporters Employee Resource Group (ERG) was officially started in 2011, but it was informally started several years before then as a means for veterans within the business to connect and support each other. The success of the Dell Veterans and Supporters ERG is due to the dedicated commitment from Michael Dell to all levels of management throughout the company. To demonstrate that point, our Veterans and Supporters ERG is sponsored by Rory Read, Dell's Chief Operating Officer and our second most senior company official. This senior level management commitment is what encourages and sustains us to recruit veterans and - equally important – to assure veteran retention.

Veteran Jobs Mission is, in our view, the leading private-sector solution addressing U.S. military veteran unemployment. It began in 2011 as a coalition of 11 companies including EMC Corporation, now a part of Dell that was committed to hiring 100,000 veterans by 2020. Since its founding, the coalition has evolved to more than 230 private-sector companies that represent virtually every industry in the U.S. economy. The Veteran Jobs Mission coalition has collectively hired more than 400,000 veterans since it began and, building on this momentum, has raised its goal to hire 1 million veterans among its member companies by 2020.

Beyond their ongoing search for top military talent, Veteran Jobs Mission members are continuing to increase their focus on retention and career development of veterans in the private sector. This includes supporting veterans as they adapt to the workplace by establishing sponsorship and on-boarding training programs, as well as industry-based coalition subgroups to increase collaboration among members.

### **How Dell Recruits Veterans and Spouses**

We utilize a number of different means and methods to recruit veterans and their spouses. We are active participants in career fairs at military bases as transitioning military members begin to look outside of their military careers. Dell's Veterans ERG

has developed customized training to suit the needs of transitioning service members on how to 'Build Your Brand.'

Dell's Talent Acquisition Team also participates in monthly partner calls with the Texas Veterans Commission to identify talent opportunities for employers seeking workers with the skills that military training brings. Dell partners with the Microsoft Software & Systems Academy which provides 18-week training for high-demand careers in cloud development, cloud administration, cybersecurity administration, and database and business intelligence administration. Program graduates gain an interview for a full-time job at Microsoft or one of our hiring partners.

Dell is also a participant in the [MBA Veteran Conference](#) which is dedicated to connecting military veteran students and alumni of the world's top-ranked universities with employers. The annual conference has veterans from the top 50 MBA programs.

Dell works with a wide variety of programs to provide training to transitioning service members, but we also use these organizations, as I will describe in a moment, as sources of well-trained future Dell Team members. Among the military transition organizations that Dell works with and recruits from are:

[Onward to Opportunity-VCTP](#) – O2O VCTP empowers highly qualified transitioning service members and military families with the specific skills, certifications and training required to start successful civilian careers in growing industries. O2O-VCTP connects hiring employers to veteran talent that is prepared to meet current, real time labor market needs. Dell Boomi offers a free technical certification program to veterans in the program and the program serves as a source of candidates for open positions at Dell.

[Military Spouse Employment Partnership](#) (MSEP) – The MSEP provides a targeted recruitment and employment solution which creates connections and direct access to military spouses.

- All Dell job opening are posted daily on the site; and
- Dell has quarterly progress calls with the MSEP account manager and provides regular updates on upcoming spouse and veteran hiring opportunities.

[FourBlock](#) – Is a Career Readiness Program which equips veterans with professional development, career exploration, and professional networks

- Dell attends sessions at Northeastern University in Boston and presents student veterans with an inside look of Dell

- Dell is also working on expanding the FourBlock partnership to a new location in Austin, Texas where Dell's headquarters is located.

**Bunker Labs** - Dell partners with Bunker Labs to connect veteran entrepreneurs with the proper resources to grow and expand their businesses. Bunker Labs is a national nonprofit whose mission is to inspire, educate and connect current and retired military members and their families to the resources needed to help them succeed as leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship.

**The Honor Foundation** – Is a unique transition institute exclusively for Navy SEALs and the US Special Operations community and supporters:

- There are unique roles for former Special Operators within Dell; and
- Dell recently hosted Honor Fellows to spend time with our chief operating officer, Rory Read, and also invited Bunker Labs to discuss veteran entrepreneurship.

**Vetted** – Is a Veteran Accelerated Management Program, a 5 month distance education and 2-month residence education module that culminates with a Capstone project followed by either placement in industry or small business start-up assistance. The program is hosted at UT Austin, Texas A&M, and Rice University. Dell recently hosted Vetted Fellows for a Harvard Business Case Review where Vetted Fellows worked with Dell executives on the business case of Michael Dell purchasing Dell and taking the company private.

At Dell, we also have a social media strategy known as the 'Heroes Among Us' Campaign, an effort to brand Dell digitally and socially in the veteran community to make sure that all transitioning service members know that their skills are welcome at Dell. Our 'Heroes Among Us Campaign' has reached 6.2 million potential readers, it has a 111% increase year over year in "apply" clicks from our Military Jobs Page and our top post on that page was read by 716,000 readers in the last year.

While these are the just the major veterans' programs that Dell invests in, you can see that that investment is well repaid by providing us with a well-qualified, well-trained pool of military veterans to join our team. The mutual benefits to veterans and to Dell are obvious.

### **Suggestions for Government to Improve Service Member Transition Experience**

As much emphasis as the federal government puts on transitioning service members, those same resources need to be invested in expanding potential employers' knowledge and awareness that there is a highly skilled pool of transitioning service

members available. With less than 1% of our population serving in the Armed Forces, many employers simply don't think about veterans and the many skills that they acquire during their military service as being qualified candidates for the jobs that they need to fill. Based on our experience at Dell, we offer the suggestions which follow to improve or expand existing programs or to engage new programs that have low overhead costs, yet significant potential benefit to transitioning veterans and to private industry.

- We encourage invigorating existing military TAP's with a curriculum aligned more to career exploration of veterans competencies and skills vs. just applying for a job
- Consideration should be given to offering pre-TAP career awareness courses
- Consideration should be given encouraging employer immersion days on base with TAPs.
- Consideration should be given programs that train civilian HR / talent acquisition professionals on the value of the veteran and how to work with TAPs
- Consideration should be given allowing civilian HR / talent acquisition professionals to intern on-site with TAP offices
- Consideration should be given to allowing TAP professionals to come on-site to learn more about the inner workings of companies
- A program might be designed to enhance an employer's basic knowledge of the fundamentals of being in the military pay grades, ranks, housing allowance, hazardous duty pay, basic housing allowance, and cost associated with healthcare benefits. These all equate to overall compensation packages in the corporate world
- Just as a Military Skills Translator can be used for comparing military occupational skills to job types, might it be possible for the military to align the amount of training and the professional development that goes into developing a service member at a particular level such as comparing the equivalency to a high school diploma, associate degree, bachelor's degree, or an advanced degree? Companies are more in tune with that language; and
- The U.S. Department of Labor should establish an advisory board of HR professionals and talent acquisition professionals to assess, audit, and contribute to the overall TAP curriculum so that it is based on real employer needs, not theory.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.