



STATEMENT OF ANDREW SANDOE  
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BEFORE THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

WITH RESPECT TO

*Pending Legislation*

March 20, 2024

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on this pending legislation. My name is Andrew Sandoe, and I am the CEO of Hire Heroes USA - the nation's leading veteran and military spouse employment nonprofit. As a former Marine helicopter pilot of nine years, I have experienced firsthand the challenges of transitioning from military to civilian life and understand the support systems that are critical to veterans and military families.

Many of the bills up for discussion today would greatly impact employment outcomes and economic opportunity for our nation's transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses. I'd like to focus my remarks on proposed improvements to the transition process, as I believe the period of separation from military service to civilian life to be most critical for a veteran's career success.

First, let me briefly describe Hire Heroes USA and the essential work that we do. Hire Heroes USA was founded in 2005 and has secured employment for more than 93,000 clients. Hire Heroes USA offers comprehensive, one-on-one employment services in all 50 states to over 20,000 individuals annually, at no cost to our clients.

The size and diversity of our client population provide us with unique insights into ways that the nation can better support veteran employment and economic opportunity. It is my pleasure to share some of these insights with the Subcommittee today.

Hire Heroes USA strongly supports the draft legislation that includes comprehensive and sustainable reforms to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). This bill would meaningfully improve the experiences of service members nearing separation or veterans who have recently separated. With approximately 200,000 service members transitioning out of the military annually, TAP and other related federal programs must be designed and implemented in ways

that maximize their impact and effectiveness. We believe that various provisions of this legislation would address long-standing concerns about the structure and performance of TAP.

Hire Heroes USA is especially supportive of the bill's proposal to codify and improve the Department of Labor's Employment Navigator and Partnership Program (ENPP). Initially a pilot program, ENPP began at 13 military installations in April 2021 and has expanded to over 30 locations.

The program is intended to complement the standard TAP coursework by offering more individualized employment services, tailored to the unique needs of each transitioning service member or their spouse. Under the program, DOL staff work with employment partner organizations, including Hire Heroes USA, to assist clients with job placement, training, and various other career or wrap-around services.

ENPP was originally established under DOL's authority to provide employment and training opportunities as part of TAP. However, this program has never been codified in statute, a step that we believe is critical for ensuring the long-term success of TAP. Beyond codifying ENPP, the bill language also makes important improvements to the program's administration of contracts with employment partners.

To date, DOL has not provided any compensation to ENPP partners and instead has relied on voluntary participation, placing nearly all of the financial burden on VSOs. However, the success of ENPP strongly depends on the involvement of non-governmental partners. We deliver direct assistance to transitioning service members and military spouses while complying with all DOL regulations and requirements around data management and program evaluation. ENPP partners currently do this all without receiving any resources to support these expenses, an approach that challenges the long-term sustainability of this program.

Hire Heroes USA alone has supported over 2,000 client referrals from the program since 2021. As ENPP continues to grow, especially if codified, it is essential that the partners taking on a significant volume of referrals receive the appropriate support to sustain their participation. This would take the form of competitively awarded contracts for the highest-impact and farthest-reaching employment partners. To be clear, we also support the continuation of voluntary ENPP partnerships, in addition to those organizations selected for contracts. The language should further clarify this to ensure small and local service providers can continue to participate voluntarily. Together, these proposed changes to ENPP would promote the long-term success of the program and ultimately benefit tens of thousands of service members every year.

Beyond ENPP, Hire Heroes USA also supports the bill's provision that would establish a DOD pilot program for military spouses to receive one-on-one counseling services based on the TAP curriculum. While some spouse-specific transition resources exist, there is still a need for more comprehensive programming covering the full range of topics relevant to transitioning military families.

As the bill's language ensures, counseling must be adequately tailored to the unique needs of each participating military spouse, including flexible scheduling arrangements. The creation of

this pilot program would yield long-term success much in the same way that TAP, despite some of its shortcomings, has gradually improved civilian outcomes for our nation's veterans.

On behalf of Hire Heroes USA, I'd like to again thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee for your ongoing commitment to the cause of veteran and military spouse employment. I welcome any questions you may have for me.