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SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Oversight Hearing: "Mission Incomplete: Strengthening the TAP Program to Ensure a Smoother Transition to Civilian Life for Tomorrow's Veterans"

**March 25, 2025**

**Introduction**

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit a written statement for the record regarding the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) on behalf of Hire Heroes USA.

Hire Heroes USA is one of the leading veteran employment nonprofit organizations in the nation. Founded in 2005, we have secured employment for more than 100,000 transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses. We provide comprehensive, one-on-one employment services in all 50 states to 20,000 individuals annually at no cost to our clients. With nearly 40 percent of our staff, including our CEO, being veterans, we understand the unique strengths, values, and insights inherent in our veteran, transitioning service member, and military spouse clients.

The transition to civilian life is more than just the point-in-time marked by separation from the military—it is, at times, a years-long process of adjusting to a new way of life. To meet and overcome our clients' challenges, Hire Heroes USA implements a highly individualized one-on-one approach, pairing each client with a Transition Specialist who walks with the client on the road to employment. The relationship between client and Transition Specialist often extends beyond the point in time when a client is employed, providing ongoing and continued support as the service member adjusts to the civilian workplace. Hire Heroes USA is focused not only on the quantity of clients served, but on the quality of the service they receive.

A 2022 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found that nearly 25 percent of service members who need maximum transition support did not attend TAP's mandatory two-day class,



and many did not enroll in TAP the requisite year before separation.<sup>1</sup> While there is a need to strengthen and improve the rates at which transitioning service members participate in TAP, there is a simultaneous need to strengthen programs where individuals are currently receiving services.

### **Employment Navigator and Partnership Program**

The Employment Navigator & Partnership Program (ENPP) was initially created in response to transitioning service members' feedback regarding TAP's lack of personalized services. ENPP addresses this gap by connecting transitioning service members to employment service providers to assist with career preparation and job placement services. Available at 40 installations and with over 70 private and nonprofit partners, ENPP takes a critical first step in addressing the need for continuity of services beyond the point of separation from the military.

In its short tenure, the ENPP has successfully complemented TAP: initial Department of Labor (DOL) data show high satisfaction and strong employment outcomes among ENPP participants. ENPP's one-on-one career services, offered by DOL staff and partnering organizations, directly address transitioning service members' needs and have demonstrated strong employment outcomes. DOL data show high satisfaction and strong employment outcomes among ENPP participants. In FY 2024, 99% of program participants reported satisfaction with their Employment Navigators and said they would recommend the program to a friend. Furthermore, 96% of participants reported that ENPP partners met or exceeded employment-related expectations. The DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) also reports that compared to their counterparts who do not participate in ENPP, transitioning service members who participate in ENPP experience a time from military separation to employment that is 63 days faster. Additionally, these same service members earn 11% higher wages than those who do not participate in ENPP on average.

ENPP's success lies in the one-on-one career services, offered by DOL staff and high-performing, nonprofit partners, that directly address transition issues and have demonstrated stronger employment outcomes. An original partner of the ENPP program, Hire Heroes USA fills a critical gap in service provision for veterans and transitioning service members. Top requests from ENPP clients—including mentoring, industry-specific training, webinars, and virtual career fairs—reflect this.

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<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office. *Servicemembers Transitioning to Civilian Life: DOD Could Enhance the Transition Assistance Program by Better Leveraging Performance Information*. May 17, 2023. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-106793>.



Hire Heroes USA has supported over 2,400 client referrals from the program since 2021. Of these referrals, Hire Heroes USA provided services to over 1,900, resulting in over 1,100 confirmed hires. For Hire Heroes USA's ENPP referrals, the 2024 average salary upon hire was \$64,485. According to DOL VETS, ENPP served more than 17,700 individuals as of June 2024.<sup>2</sup> These numbers demonstrate that through referrals, Hire Heroes USA is serving nearly 11% of the total ENPP participants. These services are provided free of charge to the client because Hire Heroes USA incurs the cost, without compensation from the federal government. At a cost of approximately \$1,500 per participant placed, Hire Heroes USA commits significant financial resources to serving ENPP clients.

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

While the program has early indicators of positive success, there are concerns regarding program sustainability and evaluation of its effectiveness. Without standardized performance metrics to evaluate outcomes, public and private leaders and decision makers cannot adequately determine the efficiency of the program. ENPP, as well as other federal programs like TAP and SkillBridge (a DOD program to jumpstart transitioning service members' civilian career through internships, trainings, and apprenticeships with private sector companies), requires increased emphasis on standardized outcomes metrics over outputs and volume of clients served.

The RAND Corporation's recent investigation of the federal and nonprofit landscape of transition programs demonstrates these problems. A June 2024 report found that the federal government spends over \$13 billion on 45 different programs across 11 agencies to support military transition each year. Approximately 97% of these funds are spent on education services rather than employment services.<sup>3</sup> Upon further investigation into the role of nonprofit organizations in the transition process, RAND found that these organizations fill a critical gap to supplement federal transition programs and initiatives, particularly in providing individualized employment services.<sup>4</sup>

Hire Heroes USA recommends examining the key takeaways from these reports—including standardizing reporting requirements, outcomes, and metrics in both the public and private

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service. "Employment Navigator and Partnership Program (ENPP) Factsheet," August 5, 2024. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/VETS/files/ENPP-Factsheet-2024-08-05.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> RAND Corporation. *Federal Programs to Assist Military-to-Civilian Employment Transitions: Limited Scrutiny and Substantial Investment in Education Programs*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1363-12>.

<sup>4</sup> RAND Corporation. *The Role, Effectiveness, and Sustainability of Nonprofit Organizations That Provide Employment Support for Veterans*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1363-10>.



sectors—to improve ENPP and other government military-to-civilian transition programs. Such standardization would increase transparency and improve oversight by allowing for more rigorous program evaluation to determine effectiveness. Furthermore, there is a need for increased public-private partnerships to grow effective transition programs. Rather than risk duplicity by creating new programs, the government should strengthen existing programs by partnering with nonprofit organizations that are already producing positive outcomes for those they serve. In these partnerships, RAND cites the need for nonprofit partners to be appropriately funded to do this work. Private organizations, relying on philanthropic support, have mitigated TAP’s shortcomings, but declining resources jeopardize the private sector’s continued sustenance of ENPP.

ENPP’s continued success depends on the involvement of non-governmental partners that have dedicated and experienced staff, data-backed best practices, and local relationships that the government cannot provide. The ENPP partnership model should include compensation for private sector nonprofits providing the highest impact on transitioning service members. All ENPP partners participating in the program ought to continue doing so, but those organizations devoting significant operational resources to supplanting DOL’s mission in TAP cannot continue an unsustainable and uncompensated business model.

A limited number of veteran employment organizations are currently positioned to provide high-quality services at a national or international scale. The sustainability of the current model relies on nonprofit partners’ continued, voluntary participation funded through limited, private resources.

For veterans and their families, the military-to-civilian transition is not merely a career or lifestyle change; it represents a fundamental challenge that they should not face alone. For many of our clients, this is the first time they’ve navigated the civilian workforce, including searching for jobs, creating a resume, interviewing for a role, negotiating compensation, and adjusting to the workplace after securing employment. ENPP partners provide effective resources and support to help veterans and transitioning service members navigate transition; however, without compensation to referral partners and evaluation of program outcomes, the longevity and impact of ENPP is at risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion. Hire Heroes USA looks forward to working with the government to improve services and outcomes for all who have served our country.