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Ms. Carla Mikkelson
Committee Assistant
Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE, Room 354
Salem, Oregon 97301

April 2, 2013

Re: SB 762, relating to veterans, directing the ODVA to conduct a public outreach campaign to prevent veteran suicide and to increase awareness of veteran's federal VA benefits.

Dear Chair Boquist and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony about Senate Bill 762.

As a family member of a US Veteran as a spouse, relative, sister or mother, I have watched the struggle most have gone through as a result of having 'served their country'. The young, vibrant boys/men who left our embraces returned as 'a shell of a man' unable to communicate their needs. Those who came back from service, most having served in one war or another, were strangers to their families and friends and to the communities they were now to call home.

The threat of suicide hung over our families as destitute, hollow men had no place to turn. Veterans associations were not prepared to deal with the horror eating these veterans alive. We buried two of them when they could get no help from the military/VA and they could no longer cope with what they felt was expected of them, when just breathing was too much of an effort.

I encourage you to pass SB 762 relating to veterans. Please, a public outreach campaign to prevent veteran suicide is far over-due.

I recently learned of a little-known veteran's benefit for long-term care expenses available to wartime veterans and their spouses. But the benefit is being overlooked by thousands of families.

The Special Pension for Veterans Aid and Attendance, established in 1952 pays up to \$1,644 a month or \$19,736 annually, toward assisted living, nursing homes and in-home care for veterans 65 and older who served during certain wartime periods. Veterans and their spouses can receive up to \$23,396 annually and spouses of deceased veterans, \$12,681.

Yet, an estimated \$22 BILLION a year goes un-claimed. Literally hundreds of thousands don't even know about it. Due to incomplete information, many disqualify themselves on income or assets of find the paperwork too burdensome. But Oregon can help her vets. The process for vets can be streamlined. Most applicants can qualify for this program and the payments are retro-active!

Help us help our veterans, the heroes of our country. I wish we would have known of the benefit mentioned above. If we had known, our veterans may have had a much better quality of life in later years.

Respectfully,

JL Forsythe

Respectfully submitted,

(Name)