

Submitter: Steve Schneider

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3773

Chair Tran, Vice-Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Honored Members of the Committee:

My name is Steve Schneider, and I live in Eugene. I am providing this testimony as a Veteran and an advocate for all Veterans across our beautiful state.

As a co-founder of Oregon Veteran Alliance, I have the privilege and honor of speaking with Veterans everyday. Our goal is to acknowledge and amplify the lived experiences and voices of Veterans from all eras and backgrounds and to support access to quality healthcare.

Moreover, I am committed to highlighting the relation between having access to healthcare and suicide prevention. Study after study shows that Veterans who regularly see a primary care doctor are less likely to attempt suicide, more likely to be housed and employed, and are able to easier access supportive services for them and their families.

For that reason, I am here to express my support for HB 3773, because this is exactly the intended goal.

Let's face it, healthcare is complex and can be overwhelming, especially when you have a range of medical needs and don't know where to start. It can feel disconnected, going between appointments and specialists and locations. For many Veterans, these are real barriers to getting the care they need.

This is why Personal Health Navigators are perfectly suited for the task.

Personal Health Navigators are already embedded in our communities, where they utilize their knowledge and lived experience to help folks make the best healthcare decisions.

Being able to understand your patient population is the key to effectively helping them, so establishing a category of Personal Health Navigators who specialize in Veterans is a smart, thoughtful, and practical step. Often, Veterans feel misunderstood, and having someone that 'gets them' is a huge step towards the kind of trust needed in these situations. Military service is different for everyone, but for many there are life-long health and social impacts that can lead to complex

challenges. This is why we need PHNs who truly understand the nature of military service, the long term outcomes, and the cultural competencies needed to effectively communicate and advocate for Veterans.

I've seen Personal Health Navigators in action. It's pretty incredible to see someone's life change around because they began accessing healthcare services that they were previously unable to find or figure out. Let's utilize these folks already in our communities to better support our beloved Oregon Veterans.

Without a state fiscal impact, and with clear economic and social benefits for Oregon, HB 3773 is a win-win. Please support this bill.

Thank you!

Steve Schneider
Combat Veteran
Suicide Prevention Program Director