



Statement of Hannah Sinoway
Sr. Veteran Transition Manager, Operations & Outreach Lead
of
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Of America
before the
New York City Council Committee on Veterans

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Chairman Deutsch and Distinguished Members of the Committee, on behalf of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and our more than 425,000 members, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on the pending legislation before the New York City Council Committee on Veterans. My name is Hannah Sinoway, the Senior Veteran Transition Manager (VTM), Operations & Outreach Lead with IAVA's Rapid Response Referral Program, or "RRRP" for short. RRRP is IAVA's high-tech, high-touch referral service for veterans and their families with a complete and comprehensive case management component. To date, RRRP has served over 8,700 veterans and family members and nearly 1,000 veterans and family members in NYC alone, providing critical support and resources to ensure this city's veteran's needs are effectively met.

After fourteen years, IAVA has become the preferred empowerment organization for post-9/11 veterans. While our members are spread throughout the nation, we are proud to say that our national headquarters is located in New York City. Since its beginning IAVA has fought for and has been successful in advocating for policies that are able to meet the needs of our newest generation of veterans, which includes our advocacy towards the creation and proper funding of the DVS. We are pleased that DVS has an increased budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and an increase of \$1 million for the Council's Veterans Initiative, and an overall positive funding outlook to support New York City's veterans.

Our testimony today is focused on four bills before the Committee. First, Int 391 to require the DVS to provide counseling services to veterans by VA-accredited counselors, and have locations located within all five boroughs. Int 394 Would, in addition to requiring DVS to establish accessible Veteran Resource Centers to provide veterans with free information on housing, social services, financial assistance, and tax exemptions that are available to them, the bill would also require DVS to submit a semi-annual report on the frequency of the services offered, and the number of veterans utilizing the service. Int 396 would mandate that the DVS create an online



and paper resource guide for veterans to cover eligibility and the application process for various veterans services at the federal, state, and local levels. Finally, Int 647 would establish a peer support hotline and provide other peer support services in partnership with veterans organizations. This number would be posted online alongside other peer-to-peer services offered.

IAVA is supportive of the intention behind these bills, however, after consulting New York City veteran advocates it appears that these bills are redundant with current DVS programs already in place. IAVA would like to hear the committee's concerns with the current programs in place and their reasoning for moving forward with the proposed legislation.

Additionally, IAVA would rather see the DVS budget of \$4.6 million for FY 2019 focused on a number of shortfalls that are not currently being addressed. Namely, the Brooklyn VA Hospitals repeated cutbacks, and affordable housing options for veterans through strengthening the VA home loan program. IAVA would encourage the committee to spend its time and resources on these pressing issues that do not currently have solutions, rather than reinforcing programs that already exist through both DVS and VSO programs.

Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to share IAVA's views on these issues today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.