

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ED FLYNN, COLETTA ZAPATA, DURKAN,
FERNANDES ANDERSON, FITZGERALD, MEJIA, MURPHY, SANTANA, WEBER,
WORRELL AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS SERVICES FOR WOMEN VETERANS

- WHEREAS:** Since the US military ended conscription and established an all-volunteer force in 1973, the number of women serving in the military has risen significantly. Although women currently comprise of nearly 20% of serving military personnel and 10% of the veteran population, many women veterans do not receive proper recognition for their services and face a host of issues when they re-enter civilian life; *and*
- WHEREAS:** Despite serving nine million enrolled veterans annually, the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) does not have medical facilities that provide the necessary and adequate maternity care for women veterans, particularly with issues related to mental illness. These medical providers instead refer them to providers in the community; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The VA Office of Women's Health recently reported that women comprise 30% of all new Veterans Health Administration (VHA) patients, and 3 out of 4 women veterans who used VA health services in FY19 had an urban residence, but the number of rural women is increasing; *and*
- WHEREAS:** VA hospitals often struggle to provide gender specific medical care for our women veterans, even as women are the fastest growing population in the VA. The *Deborah Sampson Act* seeks to address this issue by requiring the VA to offer primary care for female veterans at all medical centers and clinics, and provide access to counseling to women who suffered service-related sexual trauma as well as those who are at risk of becoming homeless; *and*
- WHEREAS:** Recent efforts to improve VA care for women veterans include S. 3526, *Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act*, sponsored by U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen of Nevada and introduced to the Senate on December 14, 2023, will require each VA medical center to create a lactation station for nursing veterans, and S.5210, *BRAVE Act of 2024*, sponsored by Senator Jon Tester of Montana, which is a bill to improve mental health services at the VA, including introducing a study on the effectiveness of suicide prevention and mental health outreach programs of Department of Veterans Affairs for women veterans; *and*
- WHEREAS:** It is found that 25% of women veterans experience Military Sexual Trauma (MST) during military service, putting them at increased risk for depression, substance abuse, and PTSD. Some women veterans also do not reach out for services due to anxiety of having to return to a military-related environment and it is found that women veterans are twice more likely to commit suicide than their male counterparts; *and*
- WHEREAS:** Women veterans are also more likely to struggle with childcare and homelessness. Many women veterans are single with dependent children and receive lower compensation for civilian work after their time in the service. According to the VA, women veterans are twice as likely to experience homelessness than those that did not serve in the military, and 1-2% of

all women veterans and 13-15% of women veterans living in poverty will experience homelessness over the course of a year; *and*

WHEREAS: Women veterans also experience difficulty in finding work related to their occupation in the military as they are commonly male-dominated fields, and most lack the college education needed to enter the service sector; *and*

WHEREAS: In Massachusetts, The Women Veterans' Network of the Department of Veterans' Services was established in 1997 with the vision of being the central resource for women veterans in Massachusetts. They meet regularly to discuss concerns facing women veterans and provide them with information and support; *and*

WHEREAS: We must recognize the challenges that women veterans face when returning home and that they receive the necessary healthcare and support, in particular to those who have experienced assault. We must make sure there are better transitional programs to align women veterans with suitable civilian jobs. There are many unoccupied positions in the VA, especially counselors and we need to make sure a higher percentage of new hires are women; *and*

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss the services for our women veterans, the Boston Office of Veterans Services, the V.A., veterans organizations, and other interested parties shall be invited to attend.

Filed on: January 8, 2025