



OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ED FLYNN AND LYDIA EDWARDS, O'Malley, Arroyo, Campbell, Essaibi-George, Wu, Flaherty, Breadon, Mejia, Bok, Janey and Baker

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:** VA hospitals are struggling to provide gender specific medical care for our women veterans, even as women are the fastest growing population in the VA. The recently passed *Deborah Sampson Act* in Congress seek 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:** 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. In a 2016 report, the VA-funded National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans found the number of women who were identified as homeless, or who accessed VA programs to end homelessness tripled to 36,000; *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 counsellors 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: February 3, 2021