

**Testimony of Lisa Beatha, University Director of Veterans Affairs CUNY  
Central Office of Student Affairs**

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Good Afternoon. My name is Lisa Beatha and I am the University Director of Veteran Affairs at CUNY Central Office of Student Affairs and a veteran of the United States Armed Forces. Thank you Chair Ulrich and Members of the Veterans Committee for the opportunity to testify.

CUNY has over 4,000 student veterans that could potentially be impacted by the proposed Resolution No. 329 A “*The Veterans’ Education Through SUNY Credits Act.*”

CUNY understands the sacrifices that our student Reservists and Veterans make for our country. Most of our service members have disrupted their lives to protect our country and communities; preserving the quality of life we enjoy. CUNY also recognizes that the quality and rigor of the training they received is comparable to earning college credits.

Prior to President Obama’s Executive Order 13607, entitled “Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members” which he issued in 2012; CUNY began a Veterans Task Force of Presidents in December 2011. This recommended that student veterans attending CUNY should have their military experience evaluated for college credit.

CUNY has continued to address the issue of awarding military transfer credit for returning service members by passing the *Academic Credit for Military Training and Experience* via the Board of Trustees (BOT) policy in June 2014.

The 2014 CUNY BOT policy regarding college credit for military experience states that:

- *CUNY Colleges may award up to 45 credits at a senior college and may award up to 30 credits at a community college to students who have served in the military*
- *Military credit will be reviewed from all Department of Defense (DOD) records for example, the Joint Service Transcript (also known as the JST).*

- *CUNY will utilize the American Council of Education (ACE) guidelines to evaluate military service credentials for college credit.*
- *The Central Office Director of Transfer Information will review the military transfer credits using the ACE guidelines specific to campus equivalences.*

It is also important to note that CUNY Central Office Admissions provides a checklist to all prospective veteran applicants who request an application fee waiver. The checklist includes instructions for providing a Transcript of Military Training and Experience after being admitted.

Additionally, The Central Office Director of Transfer Information and the University Registrar's Office are currently working to communicate the BOT policy to all CUNY campuses.

In closing, I was a CUNY transfer student; I had no idea that I could have earned transfer credit from my military service. It could have saved me at least a semester worth of tuition. Several years later, in 2003 when I became an Assistant Register at the College of Staten Island I became acutely aware of the extensive training needed to evaluate prior learning credits of student veterans.

In order for CUNY to effectively implement the mandate of this resolution we will need resources for professional development and staffing for the seamless evaluation of military transfer credit across the CUNY system.

Thank you.

**NYC Veterans Alliance**  
**[www.nycveteransalliance.org](http://www.nycveteransalliance.org)**

Testimony by Samuel Innocent  
Member, NYC Veterans Alliance Working Group

Hearing on Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass  
and the Governor to sign the Veterans' Education Through SUNY Credits Act

NYC Council Committee on Veterans  
Council Member Eric Ulrich, Chair

March 19, 2015

**Good Afternoon Chairman Ulrich, Chairman Maisel, Chairman Gentile, Chairman Koo, Chairwoman Rose, Council member Dickens, Council member Mendez.**

My name is Samuel Innocent, and I represent a newly formed grassroots organization called the **NYC Veterans Alliance**. I am a former Army medic of 7 years and a proud veteran. I currently work for the City University of New York in the office of Veterans Affairs. I testify today not on behalf of the City University of New York but on behalf of student veterans within the CUNY system—current and future veterans who deserve to have their military education and work experience count towards their academic endeavors.

There are currently 2,784 student veterans in the CUNY system who are tracked as veterans. When we estimate those which are not being tracked for any number of reasons, that number increases to 3,000-plus. Of this body of student veterans the median age is 27.

While I cannot tell the story of each and every one of these veterans, I can tell my own and hope that it will help emphasize why veterans in the public school systems of New York deserve credit for their military education and work experience.

I came to The City College of NY (CUNY) in January of 2011 following the completion of my term of active duty. Though I had an Associate's degree and 70- plus credits from Jefferson Community College (SUNY), only 34 of those credits counted toward my academic records at CUNY. Of these 34 credits, none were from the military; they all came from night classes that I attended at Jefferson Community College after my military workday. Jefferson Community College, given its close proximity to Fort Drum and understanding of the military, granted me about 30 credits for my military education. As a nationally certified EMT, JCC granted me credit for all of the Army medical courses they recognized as equivalent to those that they offered, while City College did not—even though City College offered equivalent curriculum through their continuing and professional studies program.

This began my two-year journey of advocacy at The City College of New York to persuade the administration to evaluate all military transcripts and award credit where it was due. After two years of meetings, petitions, and advocacy, the student veterans of City College and I succeeded in getting the school to evaluate military transcripts for credit and to also allow for early registration in order for veterans to maximize their benefits. This was a win, but it should not have been a struggle—and it should apply to all public colleges statewide.

The final part of my personal experience does not speak to the end of my journey, but rather the beginning. When exiting the military, I applied for reciprocity in order to change my national EMT license to a New York State EMT license so that I would be able to work part time while in school. I served as a combat medic on foot patrols and in clinics in Afghanistan, taking care of soldiers on the battlefield, and I also served stateside in military hospitals at Fort Drum and West Point. I am thankful that New York State granted me reciprocity for my experience, and it lasted two years. I ask of the higher education representatives present today, if New York State saw fit to grant me a professional license for my military coursework, certifications, and experience—why can't our academic institutions do the same?

In closing, passing this legislation would not only ease the transitions of veterans into academia and into their civilian lives, but it would also begin to provide a baseline standard of how we value the years of service and professionalism these young men and women have given to not only the state of New York, but to their country. We cannot give them back the years in which they were young and without much obligation, the years in which they were free to take risks. They've spent those years in service to us. We should show them that those years were precious to us too.

On behalf of the NYC Veterans Alliance, I thank you for this opportunity to speak today. Pending your questions, this concludes my testimony.

## Written Submission to the New York City Council Committee on Veterans

Amanda M. Spray, PhD

Chairman Ulrich and members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting testimony from our organization today at the NY Council Committee on Veterans. I am Dr. Amanda Spray, Psychologist and Liaison to the VA Medical Center at the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Military Family Clinic at NYU Langone Medical Center. I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the leadership and staff of the Military Family Clinic in support of Proposed Resolution No. 329-A to encourage the passage and signature of the Veterans' Education Through SUNY Credits Act.

The Steven and Alexandra Cohen Military Family Clinic at NYU Langone Medical Center was founded to provide high quality mental health treatment accessible to veterans, active duty service members, and their families. We focus on treating the whole patient, which extends beyond their mental health symptoms to include their overall quality of life. This quality of life is affected by their relationships with family members and friends, leisure activities, career and educational goals as these factors are critically important to the mental health of an individual. Research indicates that education has a significant positive impact on one's mental health and can serve as a protective factor in dealing with stress and adversity.

Military personnel learn significant skills in their training and service and it is our duty as civilians to recognize these individuals as possessing an education. Several schools offer credit for military experience, including CUNY schools which accept credits for both military coursework (AARTS or SMART) and the life experience interview. However, there is currently no state-wide mandate in New York State to accept such experience. We are behind other states in providing this mandate, which is essential to making New York a veteran-friendly state. By passing a state-wide mandate, NY is communicating the importance of education and recognition of and respect for a veteran or active duty service man or woman's service. It demonstrates societal support by giving college credit in the civilian domain for skills learned in the military domain.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony on this important issue.



Dan McSweeney <djmcsweeney@gmail.com>

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## Testimony

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Dan McSweeney <dmcsweeney@uwvc.org>  
To: dmcsweeney <dmcsweeney@uwvc.org>

Thu, Mar 19, 2015 at 11:30 AM

Members of the City Council, Fellow Veterans, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the City Council's proposed proclamation in support of the Veterans' Education through SUNY Credits Act.

I will be very brief in offering three points that support this proclamation and the relevant proposed legislation.

First off, it is an increasingly common practice for institutions of higher education in the U.S. to offer course credits for life experience. The majority of states already offer veterans credit through their public colleges and universities and SUNY should follow suit: Supporting the proposed legislation is the fair thing to do.

Secondly, the standards of training and education throughout the Armed Services are quite impressive, in some cases surpassing norms found in higher education in American academia. I have seen this first-hand through my service with enlisted Marines whose intelligence, sophistication, and preparation matched those I saw in many of my college classmates: Supporting the proposed legislation is the honest thing to do.

Finally, offering veterans a leg up by recognizing their significant preparation while in uniform will promote their continued service and leadership as they enter the working world and settle into local communities: Supporting this proposed legislation is the beneficial thing to do.

In sum, I offer enthusiastic support for the Veteran's Education through SUNY Credits Act and the United War Veterans Council stands ready to assist in whatever ways we can. The post-9/11 veterans who attend our Vietnam Veterans Commemoration Event on March 28th to honor that generation's service and sacrifices are living proof of why this proposal is sensible and necessary.

Thank you for your attention and for your efforts toward this objective.

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**Dan McSweeney**  
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Appearance Card

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I represent: NYC Veteran Alliance

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