

**Written Statement
of
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**Before the
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
United States House of Representatives**

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“Helping Veterans with Emergency Medical Training Transition to Civilian Service”

Chairman Pitts, Congressman Pallone, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you. I am Daniel Nichols, Senior Vice President of Victory Media Inc. a small disabled veteran owned business, and Chief Executive Officer of Victory Tech, our vocational and workforce training institute. I offer my testimony to you today on July 11, 2012 as an OIF veteran, a member of the Navy Reserve, and one of a growing number of veteran entrepreneurs dedicated to creating jobs, and successful business enterprises capable of returning value and resource back to my military family and local community.

Unlike other entities which tout a sense of entitlement, Victory Media brings long-term and sustainable economic opportunity to the military community by showing corporate America the business value of military service. We are by no means alone in this: Iraq and Afghanistan Veteran leadership and entrepreneurship is on the rise and we are supported, mentored and surrounded by savvy Veteran business leaders from Vietnam, the Cold War Era, the Gulf War and beyond.

We hold to a new framework of belief about our service: We believe that military service is a privilege, an honor; We believe that it makes good business sense to hire veterans and to invest in veteran businesses; and we firmly believe that we are better-off for having served.

The barriers to success of this next generation mirror that of our beloved country, and we have not returned to our homes and communities from global service to witness the fall of the American dream.

For far too long we have known precisely what the challenges are in military transition, and as a nation we have been unable to adequately address the perceived gap between military training outcomes and civilian workplace skills, and that includes the healthcare sector.

We are told that adequate solutions are too complex, too costly, too time consuming and too difficult to tackle. Across the United States, more than 40 million hiring transactions take place per month, and our accepted means of managing this transactional nightmare is a currency called the resume. Ultimately the resume is an indecipherable, inefficient, and outdated mess. Worse, the reliance on narrative over validated competency is a significant impediment to transitioning military

members whose language of work is wholly different from the civilian world. There are many organizations and consultants providing services to address the challenges individuals and corporations face along with countless government programs: but the vast majority offer only limited “soft-skill” solutions, which are inadequate measures of satisfaction and workplace preference coupled with meager skill assessment.

It is not enough, and it misses the point entirely.

Our military members have skills, and have no problem being put to the test to prove their competence. As recruitment director for a prominent health system, I lead the development and implementation of a new competency-based selection process for Emergency Medical and Clinical technicians across the hospital as we were facing significant turnover.

At the time my team of recruiters handled more than 85,000 resumes for these positions; the vast majority of applicants were unqualified, the workload was grueling, and the conditions which persist due to high unemployment resulted in costly turnover. Military resumes were typically flushed straight out of the process by our electronic applicant system.

Our methodology was straightforward; we performed a comprehensive competency review of the position requirements, we developed assessments and tests for the most relevant and predictive foundational competencies, we determined appropriate passing levels and provided the assessments to each applicant to determine their eligibility for the position. Military talent rose to the top. Yet the problems for veteran talent continued: we found that we either could not hire them because they lacked the state required credentials, or we had to first employ them in lesser positions because the credentials they did have were well below the position for which they were found sufficiently qualified.

Success on the job is about competency, or “sufficiency of qualification.” The “Hire”, however, is a business transaction that is highly regulated and controlled: The Hire is an artificial process that discriminates inherently against our military service members.

I believe the ultimate solution would create a means by which training provided by the Department of Defense could be accredited by civilian standards, and therefore allow military training and skills to easily transition into existing safeguards and competency standards established by civilian and state institutions.

HR 4124 on the surface appears to be small change. These changes, however, would positively affect the livelihood of our veterans and improve healthcare delivery. HR 4124 provides for two specific possibilities that have not yet been considered:

1) HR 4124 allows for military training to be mapped to equivalencies in credentials above the basic entry level qualifications. The Emergency Medical Technician credentialing ladder has basic, intermediate and advanced specialty certifications. To date, military training has only be mapped to the EMT Basic; which falls well below the pay rate and functional capability of service members who have honed their skills on the front-lines.

2) HR 4124 calls for the development of methods to establish equivalency. Solutions to date have forced skilled medics into lengthy and costly training programs ... a redundancy that is ineffective, inefficient and detrimental to the economic success of our military members. Using GI Bill benefits to sit in class that they could teach is not a good use their hard-earned benefits.

According to UCX data released from the Army in Fiscal Year 2011, 190,000 DD-214's were generated by the US Army, and 100,000 applied for unemployment. Nearly 3,000 of those applying for unemployment last year were Army medics ... they were the third largest military occupational specialty to do so. There is a problem, and we have not yet solved it.

We founded Victory Tech for the express purpose of creating an alternative for our military families. A means of achieving the required academic validation of competency to qualify for the appropriate level of credential without unnecessary use of time, benefits or personal income.

I wish to commend this legislation to the Committee and I and my colleagues stand ready to assist in any way possible. Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you, I would like to submit the remainder of my testimony for the record.

“Sufficiency of Qualification” and a competency model

The greatest challenges in selection and management of human capital lie at the transactional level. Decision-making surrounding a hire, termination, promotion, tasking, reporting, team construction, project assignment, etc. rests on a manager's or organization's ability to observe, infer, trust and ultimately make the correct choice. A myriad of options, products, and tools exist to assist in a decision process that often comes down to intuition in the face of what is essentially unknowable complexity.

Demystifying “The Hire”

Using the “hire” as an example, we will consider the various decision points the typical organization navigates to arrive at a selection. The process generally begins with the recognition of a need for additional staff to perform a variety of functions, some of which are obvious tasks, some of which are not. Let's say an organization decides to hire additional emergency medical technicians (EMT). Assuming that the organization has hired EMT professionals in the past, they may have a “template” to work from, generally in the form of a “job description”. If not, they will likely task a manager to develop a job description or profile based on what that hiring manager perceives to be the ideal candidate.

Regardless of how an employer derives their job requirements, the job transaction is based upon a *job description* to which a number of additional screening “questions” may be added to narrow the pool of applicants. Interested applicants submit a narrative document known as the “resume,” as evidence of their qualifications. Resumes, being narrative in nature, have few standards, but can be “parsed” into discrete data fields (generally aligned to those basic requirements identified in the job description). Additional measures may be added to further filter the pool including electronic and paper forms that require the applicant to rewrite the content of the resume in a format determined by the employer to more easily baseline and compare

information presented by the applicant. Once all the applicant data has been normalized into a similar format, the process typically takes a dramatic turn into the realm of the subjective.

From the perspective of the job seeker, the entire process is not only intimidating and confusing, but devaluing of their own perspective of their capabilities, motivations and capacity to perform the requirements of the job. Worse, a candidate generally has no idea whether they qualify or not for a position. For transitioning military, this process rapidly becomes a nightmare that results in underemployment when the need for income exceeds confidence in capability.

Undoubtedly, all parties involved would be better served by a cleaner, clearer system that allows candidates to know if they qualify for a position, and managers to have confidence that their final slate of candidates can perform the required functions. To begin to address the inefficiencies and high costs associated with worker selection, promotion and development, Victory Media, Inc. through its educational arm Victory Tech, developed a more cohesive means of classifying work requirements at the fundamental unit of work, the competency.

A Competency Based Model

In our model framework, time becomes only one means by which mastery can be demonstrated, but coequal with more definitive and relevant measures such as proof by examination, demonstration, and certification. Employers may still select “time utilizing a given skill” as a measure of maturity or sufficiency, but would be wise to consider more relevant testing mechanisms as supplemental proof of sufficiency of qualification (and skill relevance).

In concert with this notion, the Victory Tech model was born from more than a decade of expertise in military job transition, and is structured to open the doors of possibility with a functional solution that addresses the inherent complexities and inefficiencies of human resource transactions, most notably the “Hire.” Better still, Victory Media is building a framework to improve the translation of job skills from military occupational categories, and a means by which the “unmeasurable” competencies developed during military service may gain recognition for the purpose of employment in the civilian world. So too will be a new ability to establish competency as a measure of job fit.

The difficulty of achieving the goal of “sufficiency of qualification” is evidenced in the inherent separation of job requirements and worker characteristics. Relating these attributes is the central purpose of any hiring system, and has been the express purpose of federal and state workforce systems. “More education,” has been the clarion call, but the solution for America’s transitioning military is not to throw hard-earned benefits after “training” that only repeats skills already trained once, tested, and proven on the job. Rather, our system should acknowledge the high quality of training delivered in the military and establish processes to rapidly verify, fill in the gaps and employ at the highest appropriate professional level. This appears to be the intent of HR 4124.

If for no other reason, HR 4124 is a first mover in a new direction that provides some hope of a solution not rooted entirely in re-hashed education - which places the entire weight of responsibility for skill development on the shoulders and bank-accounts of students who probably exceed the knowledge and experience of the faculty instructing them. HR 4124 may not take large steps, but it takes important steps in re-shaping the way we think about transitional workers

and skill translation, and it provides a needed source of relief for our military service members and their families.

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About Victory Media

A veteran-owned business anchored by experienced managers, a strong performance history and aggressive growth plans, Victory Media is a global military niche media firm headquartered in Pittsburgh with field offices coast to coast. The company has been honored as one of the 30 fastest growing companies in Pittsburgh three years straight by Pittsburgh Business Times. Victory Media's brands have been the source of countless media coverage and its employees, as experts in their field, are called upon to speak on military and veteran related issues.

Victory Tech as the education arm of Victory Media partners with businesses to produce skilled workers for the jobs of today and far into the future. Building a workforce is not a simple matter of setting up a learning management system, it takes planning, assessment, and applied knowhow at the individual and aggregate level. The Victory Tech process helps organizations better understand their human capital to reduce risk, improve productivity, and enter new markets with confidence. Learn more online at www.victorytechinstitute.com

Victory Media owns and operates five global brands: G.I. Jobs, Victory Tech, NaVOBA, Vetpreneur, and Military Spouse. Victory Media, Inc. is a GSA-scheduled SDVOB: GSA Contract GS 02F-0017T.