

Judge Patricia Marks
Monroe County Court Judge, Retired

2021-2022 Joint Budget Committee – Human Services
Testimony 2/9/2021

Thank you to Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, and members of the Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Ways and Means Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am pleased to provide testimony on the importance of Veterans Treatment Courts and ensuring its access to all 62 counties in New York State.

I am focusing on my personal experience so that you understand the basis of my testimony and my belief that Veteran Treatment Courts provide an invaluable resource this community:

My experience:

I am the daughter of a World War II Army veteran who was a prisoner of war. I am the widow of a Vietnam war Army veteran who served as a medic in Vietnam. As a Monroe County Court Judge I was the founder of the Monroe County Veterans Treatment Court. After my retirement from the bench, I contracted with Justice For Vets, a division of the National Association of Drug Treatment Courts and trained Veteran Treatment Court teams in other areas of the United States. I served as interim director of the Veterans Outreach Center and helped to develop the Veterans Committee of the Monroe County Bar Association. I have worked and continue to work with several local Veteran agencies providing pro bono or reduced fee services for veterans in need of civil legal services.

As you are aware, veterans are not immune from the issues that plague society, and the nature of their military service can leave some veterans especially vulnerable. It is a seldom told story, the struggle some veterans go through when they return from service.

Veterans Treatment Courts maintain the traditional partnerships and practices of highly successful drug courts. By addressing the underlying cause of criminal behavior in a highly structured and closely supervised environment, Veterans Treatment Courts strike the proper balance between accountability and compassion. The restoration of veterans' sense of honor allows them to reengage with their communities as productive, law-abiding citizens. However, not every veteran has access to this program across New York State and if left untreated, these issues put veterans at significant risk for arrest and incarceration. Expanding this program will help reach more veterans facing a crisis and create a productive path to returning them to their families and communities, where they belong.

The success of this program speaks for itself. Veterans Treatment Courts have helped over 4,500 veterans in the state and has shown its popularity by being adopted by states other throughout the country. These programs not only help return veterans to a productive life, but also provide cost savings to the community as these programs are less expensive than processing veterans through the criminal justice system.

I am in full support of trying to achieve universal access for Veterans Treatment Courts, and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding my experience with these courts.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia D. Marks
Monroe County Court Judge, Retired

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