

House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science, and Related Agencies

Outside Witness Testimony  
Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations

**Statement of Timothy Wynn, USMC, Retired  
Graduate of the Philadelphia Veterans Court  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**on behalf of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals**

April 29, 2021

Chairman Cartwright, Ranking Member Aderholt, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to have the opportunity to submit my testimony on behalf of 1.5 million graduates of treatment courts, including drug courts and veterans treatment courts, and the 35,000 people working in these lifesaving courts. Given the overlapping crises of substance use and the ongoing impact of COVID-19, **I am requesting the Congress provide funding of \$100 million to the authorized Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program (Pub. L. 115-271) and \$30 million for the authorized Veterans Treatment Court Program at the Department of Justice (Pub. L. 114-198) for fiscal year 2022.**

My name is Tim Wynn and I write you as a father to three daughters, a husband, and a proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps. I am also a 2014 graduate of the Philadelphia Veterans Treatment Court, and veteran mentor to the same court I graduated from. I would not be here today if it weren't for that program. The accountability, mentorship, treatment, counseling and other services I received instead of jail saved my life and repaired my family, and provided me the opportunity to commit myself to the service of others. In 2019, I received a full pardon from the governor of Pennsylvania. I am just one of millions of success stories to come out of drug courts and veterans treatment courts. Success stories that would not exist without the funding provided to courts around the country by the Department of Justice.

I serve as the Philadelphia court's veteran mentor coordinator, where I have the privilege of witnessing firsthand the incredible transformations and triumphs of fellow veterans as they overcome substance use and/or trauma that were so like my own. But I am also seeing a deep toll brought on our veteran participants by two crises currently gripping American life: the substance use epidemic and the isolation and difficulty of accessing services because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Treatment courts are a public health and public safety response addressing both these issues by expanding to provide more critical and immediate services to their communities. It's easy to see that programs just like ours across the country need continued funding to ensure there are effective, evidence-based responses to save lives, reunite families, and make communities safer.

The evidence showing the effectiveness of these programs is clear. The Government Accountability Office finds the drug court model reduces crime by up to 58 percent. Further, the Multi-Site Drug Court Evaluation conducted by the Department of Justice confirmed drug court significantly reduces both drug use and crime, and found cost savings averaging \$6,000 for every

individual served. When you consider the hope and healing drug courts and veterans treatment courts bring to so many, the savings are priceless.

I am proud of my service to this country. But like so many of my fellow brothers and sisters in uniform, I struggled to adjust to life at home from war. I was arrested for the first time just four days after getting home from Iraq. I didn't know it at the time, but my anger was a symptom of untreated trauma, exacerbated by substance I was self-medicating with to try and cope. That first arrest was the start of a cycle that led me in and out of the justice system for years, while my family life crumbled.

That cycle was stopped in 2013, when I was arrested for the last time. Lost, broken, separated from my family, and facing years behind bars, I was given the opportunity participate in the Philadelphia Veterans Court. From the moment I arrived in veterans treatment court, something began changing in me. Surrounded by my fellow veterans and supported by a team who cared about me and my future, I felt comfortable accepting help. I hadn't realized it, but for ten years I was in search of a new mission. Now I finally had one: get better, repair the damage I had caused, be of service. In the months that followed, the hopelessness I'd carried with me since returning home was gradually replaced with the purpose and pride I felt when I entered the Marines. The veterans treatment court was a multi-disciplinary team that ensured I received substance use treatment and counseling, as well as the other local, state and federal resources I earned as a result of my service. Along the way, I also met regularly with a volunteer veteran mentor who helped keep me on the right path.

The veterans treatment court program wasn't easy. The court staff were invested in my path to recovery from the first day, which meant being accountable to my community. While in the program, I submitted to frequent and random drug testing, participated in community service, and attended regular treatment sessions and hearings where I reported my progress to the judge. It's because of these measures that I am healthy, sober, and can celebrate my recovery every day.

Veterans treatment court gave me so much more than an alternative to incarceration. It's because of the program I am a father to my daughters and use my experience to help other veterans overcome their own hardships. In 2019, knowing just how effective treatment courts are, the governor of Pennsylvania awarded me a full pardon. Veterans treatment court allowed me to enjoy all the freedoms I fought to protect as a Marine.

There are approximately 15,000 veterans like me participating in more than 400 veterans treatment courts across the country. This is just a fraction of the 150,000 individuals currently receiving treatment in drug courts and veterans treatment courts nationwide. Behind these numbers are real people like me; people with families and futures who are assets to the community because of treatment court.

I encourage this committee to provide \$100 million for the drug court discretionary grant program and \$30 million for veterans treatment courts so more people like me can find their path to recovery. There is no better example than drug courts and veterans treatment courts for proven programs that guarantee financial returns and measurable success.