

**Pamela Hardy, Senior Associate in People Services,
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before the
Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight of the
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Hearing on
Veterans Employment and Government Contractors
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Madame Chairwoman, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify here today.

My name is Pamela Hardy and I am a Senior Manager in the Diversity & Inclusion team in People Services at Booz Allen Hamilton. I am responsible for all aspects of our organizational efforts to build, maintain, and assure a diverse and inclusive culture. Part of my job is to make Booz Allen an employer of choice for veterans.

Booz Allen Hamilton is based in McLean, Virginia, with over 80 offices throughout the United States. For nearly a century, Booz Allen has been at the cutting edge of helping U.S. government agencies, defense components, and other business and institutional clients accomplish critical missions.¹ Our firm, now public, employs about 25,000 people and is one of the federal government's most trusted contractors. We partner with government clients across a broad range of government agencies to solve their most important and complex problems; our work in analytics, engineering, operations, strategy and organization, and technology helps our customers better execute the most challenging government missions around the world.

Booz Allen is known as one of the leading federal employers of retired and former military service members. *Forbes* recently reported that Booz Allen ranked as the top employer for veterans, citing the approximately one-third of our employees who have self-identified as having military backgrounds.² We have also been recognized by members of the National Guard and the Reserve, as well as by the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization, for outstanding practices and policies that assist those groups. And we are honored to have been named in the top ten of the G.I. Jobs list of Top 100 Military Friendly Employers for six years running. We are proud to be consistently ranked among the country's top employers for veterans,

¹ Missions that Matter, Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Report, Booz Allen Hamilton (2011), available at <http://www.boozallen.com/investors/annual-report/annual-report-fy2011/missions-that-matter>.

² Jacquelyn Smith, *The Top Employers for Veterans*, FORBES (Apr. 23, 2012), available at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/04/23/the-top-employers-for-veterans/>.

and I am honored to have the opportunity today to speak about our demonstrated commitment to the men and women who have made personal sacrifices to serve our country.³

Booz Allen's commitment to military employment

Booz Allen Hamilton is a leader in the employment of so many former military service members because our commitment to veterans and wounded warriors is part of our corporate culture, extending from our senior leadership throughout the firm. We're successful, we believe, because we execute on this commitment in a highly integrated way—involving multiple aspects of our business and in every layer of our company—much like we integrate our various capabilities for our government and commercial clients.

We approach military hiring, as one might expect, through a variety of creative recruitment programs. But we also leverage the wide range of expertise we develop and provide to military clients—such as knowledge of veterans health services—to help us attract and support new hires; we support veteran-owned businesses through our contracting organization; we use members of our own workforce to mentor and support other veteran employees through employee resource groups, mentoring circles, education and leadership programs, and other means; we focus on programs to support military families and spouses; and importantly, veterans and wounded warriors are a major focus and beneficiary of the firm's philanthropic efforts through our Community Partnerships group. And all of these efforts are coordinated by an assigned committee of senior leaders to ensure maximum effectiveness.

It is the integration of effort throughout the firm, we believe, that makes the difference for hiring and retaining veterans. We are committed to employing and offering an inclusive culture for veterans because we respect and admire their service to our country, but also because former members of the military have strong training and bring a unique knowledge and experience base to their work. Few can know the challenges that face our U.S. military and other government clients better than those who have served our country in uniform.

Recruitment and retention: Booz Allen's experience and best practices

Much of our success in employing veterans is due to our core efforts to recruit military talent and retain them on our team. In fact, Booz Allen—as part of our client work—assists federal agencies with programs to help military personnel, wounded warriors, and their families transition from active duty into the civilian workforce, so we have a strong understanding of the military-to-civilian career transition process.

Booz Allen invests significant time and resources into improving our military recruitment efforts. Because Booz Allen's core work is conducted in such close collaboration with our government clients, including defense and intelligence agencies, we provide a unique civilian workplace environment that is attractive to those leaving military service. But over the years we have come to believe that our success in this area can be best attributed to a dynamic set of strategies for hiring and retaining former military personnel.

³ Supporting Veterans and Wounded Warrior Reintegration, Booz Allen Hamilton, *available at* <http://www.boozallen.com/consulting/view-our-work/48383297/supporting-veterans-and-wounded-warrior-reintegration>.

Recruitment. In its outreach efforts, Booz Allen's military recruiting team annually participates in veterans-focused career fairs across the country. Booz Allen also cooperates with the Labor Department's Transition Assistance Program ("TAP") by conducting direct jobs marketing at TAP centers and Family Services Offices on key military installations.

Another best practice for veterans' employment is to focus recruitment efforts on service members at the front end of their time in the military. For example, we have an active Student Veteran Intern Pilot program. By marketing our firm to these individuals early in their career, we try to create a pathway for them to rejoin a familiar community at Booz Allen later in their careers. We also recruit junior military officers through a program that connects these officers directly to a member of our military recruiting team. And further, we also have forged a relationship with the U.S. Army Partnership for Youth Success (PaYS) program, which offers Army soldiers a chance to pursue job opportunities with our firm after their military service.

We also facilitate strategic recruitment partnerships with military community organizations, and we leverage these partnerships to identify military and extended military community talent. Through these partnerships, the firm markets its employment opportunities to targeted organizations, including organizations focused on disabled and severely disabled veterans.

Retention. Veterans' employment programs are not tested only at the point of hiring. We have prioritized retention as part of our military-related talent program and have played a role as thought leader on veterans' inclusion initiatives with clients such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Department of Navy, Department of Labor, DC Business Leadership Network, and others. We are proud of our success in retaining veterans in Booz Allen jobs and have designed and implemented innovative programs to smooth the transition between a veteran's separation from the military and his or her integration into the civilian workforce.

The Armed Services Forum, one of 14 employee resource groups offered by the firm, is a cornerstone of our retention initiatives. Led by our own employees, it provides a forum for veterans to communicate with each other and with our senior management about easing the transition from a military culture to a civilian workplace. Ideas generated in the Forum have assisted our Human Resources Department in developing programs to assist in the reintegration of staff returning from active duty. Throughout the year, the program provides resources to the families of activated service members. The Forum is not just open to veterans, but also to our non-veterans wishing to gain first-hand insights into the military perspective. The Forum is a success because employees and senior management alike so strongly support it.

Booz Allen has also served as a thought leader on issues of veterans' recruitment and inclusion. Inspired by the success of our Armed Services Forum, the Disability Management Employer Coalition recruited Booz Allen employee Andrew Gilbert, one of the Forum's co-founders, to contribute to their report. Their guide, "Workplace Warriors: The Corporate Response to Deployment and Reintegration," identifies the challenges returning veterans face and strategies and resources employers can use to support them. Many of the lessons learned from our program found their way into the final report, including suggestions about establishing

a military leave and return policy and a clear communication plan to explain benefits and programs.

Booz Allen is consistently recognized in the industry for top-notch training initiatives, and we have tailored these training opportunities to veterans. Our development programs include classroom-based as well as self-paced and online programs targeted at veterans. We run learning circles that are focused on certain military communities and a program that matches new hires with fellow employee mentors based on shared interests in military culture. We believe the combination of formal and informal programs for employees to share experiences helps solidify the integration of those who have served into the broader civilian workplace environment at Booz Allen.

Another Booz Allen initiative that eases the transition of veterans into the civilian workforce is our Disability Accommodations Team (DAT). This team reaches out to all newly hired veterans who self-identify as disabled or as a Disabled Veteran to apprise them of services available to staff who may need or would benefit from workplace accommodations and/or ergonomic office equipment. A core feature of the program is that it provides a centralized point of contact for these veterans who might not otherwise be comfortable requesting this type of assistance from their career or job manager. In addition, costs for ergonomic equipment or accommodation needs are covered by a separate firmwide investment fund managed by the DAT, ensuring maximum effectiveness without reliance on or impact to individual team budgets. We believe this program significantly eases what can be a difficult transition to the civilian workforce for veterans who may need or benefit from services like these for the first time in their careers.

Public service in the veterans' community is one of the most popular among Booz Allen's employee public service initiatives. We foster a supportive environment for veterans and other military employees and facilitate opportunities for all employees to give back to the military community and strengthen relationships within the company. Among many philanthropic efforts, Booz Allen works in partnership with the organization Rebuilding Together to identify veteran homeowners, among others, whose homes are in need of repairs. Just last month, Booz Allen deployed more than 1,200 volunteers in 32 cities to make free repairs to 67 properties. Fifteen of those properties impacted veterans and wounded warriors, including repairs to transitional housing for veterans in San Diego and Boston.

Finally, we are excited to share with the subcommittee our recently launched initiative to study how communities can strengthen collaboration on veterans' issues with public, private, and non-profit groups. We have hosted four interactive community summits to date, in San Diego, California; Fayetteville, North Carolina; San Antonio, Texas; and Radcliff, Kentucky—cities across the United States where military families live, and where Booz Allen has a strong local presence. Earlier this year, for example, our San Antonio summit brought together roughly 30 leaders from local government, advocacy groups, academia, healthcare provider organizations, businesses, and non-profit organizations to discuss providing care that is truly veteran-centric. We identified the most pressing hurdles facing transitioning warriors, developed collaborative action plans, and defined discrete initiatives that would help ensure long-term engagement with our participating organizations. These events serve as a catalyst for innovative ideas accessible to all veterans in these communities, not just those we employ.

We believe programs and initiatives such as those I just described have been key to our success in veterans' employment. Despite these achievements, however, we still face certain challenges and are always seeking ways to improve our military employment efforts. As with probably every firm that hires veterans, we find that providing a highly supportive and effective transition to the civilian workplace is most important to ensure the employee's success on the job. While we feel we are already highly effective in this area, we know that there is always room to explore new initiatives and new ways of communicating with veterans about those initiatives. We already work with government clients to develop programs for the transition from the military, but stronger coordination between the military and civilian employers on transition issues in particular should be a goal.

Suggestions for improving the federal government's efforts to facilitate veterans' employment

The subcommittee has asked us to discuss our company's experience in assembling information regarding veterans and filing this information with the Department of Labor. Annually, Booz Allen submits our employment statistics to the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) office. Each year we report the number of veterans employed throughout the company, as well as the number of veterans we hired during the year.

Booz Allen has long made hiring and retaining veterans a priority, and we agree with the federal government's efforts to encourage federal contractors to employ veterans. The federal government has struck the right regulatory balance, we believe, because it asks companies to think creatively about their veterans' employment efforts. We are committed to these substantive goals, as well as the need for reporting requirements that enable the government's oversight function in this critical area.

In addition, our experience has allowed us to distill a few suggestions for reform in this area. Our first recommendation is that all completed VETS-100 and VETS-100A reports be made available to the public online in a searchable format. Organizations including the U.S. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and American Veterans (AMVETS) have testified before one of your peer committees to the importance of transparency in veterans' hiring, and we concur with these views. We are confident this change would yield solutions because data analytics are the foundation not only of our own successful programs but also of many of the consulting services we provide for our government clients, including clients seeking strategies to improve their veterans'-related programs. Making the VETS reports public would permit firms to develop datasets from them and in turn formulate new and increasingly creative solutions for improving veterans' employment at their respective firms.

Beyond that, we also recommend that there be greater visibility to employers about how the wealth of data that is collected is actually used. To know what data is of greatest importance to the government, and more specifically how it is used to benefit which particular programs, would allow employers to fine tune their hiring strategies to better align with the government's goals and priorities. We believe this reform too will increase the information flow between federal contractors and the government, further enabling creative approaches to some of the issues we have discussed here today.