



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2215		DATE: 2/27/2024	
COMMITTEE: Veterans			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/27/2024 11:43 PM
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I am in Support of this Bill if the Therapies are deemed to be safe, effective and rewarding results.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: BLAKE ARRON RICHARDSON		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: blake@helpourheroes.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/27/2024 6:26 AM

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Good day, Honorable Members of the Missouri House and Senate, I am Blake Richardson, a proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps, having served with distinction and honor to the rank of Sergeant. I am a lifetime member of the esteemed Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organization. In my ongoing commitment to support those who serve, I founded and presently preside over 'Help Our Heroes', a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Through this platform, I actively advocate for the welfare and rights of Veterans, active service members, first responders, and their families. Today, I stand before you to recount my personal journey navigating the challenges of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I aim to shed light on the transformative impact of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) - a treatment that has not only revolutionized my life, but also the lives of countless other Veterans I have advocated for. Moreover, I intend to champion the cause for sustained support and acknowledgment of HBOT as an effective therapy for both PTSD and TBI. During my tenure of deployments overseas, particularly in combat zones, I endured a series of low-level blasts (LLB) which resulted in multiple brain injuries. Over time, the symptoms of mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) began to manifest more prominently. Furthermore, my participation in numerous combat training exercises exposed me to additional low-level blasts (LLB), further compounding the challenge. For clarification, the term HLB refers to high-level blast overpressure, commonly associated with the detonation of an improvised explosive device (IED). On the other hand, LLB signifies low-level blast overpressure, typically generated from the discharge of specific weapons such as artillery, shoulder-mounted devices, .50 caliber firearms, and even indirect fire. These variations in overpressure are critical to understanding the different sources and impacts of blast-related injuries. In January 2006, while stationed at Al Taqaddum, Iraq, I experienced a life-altering event. An RPG struck the sandbags just outside the general-purpose (GP) tent where I was sleeping. The concussive force of the blast resulted in a mild traumatic brain injury. This incident led to an immediate onset of disorienting symptoms: involuntary urination, sudden ringing and hearing loss, confusion, fragmented recollections of the event, recurring migraines, and short-term memory loss. Prior to embarking on my second tour of duty in Iraq, I underwent rigorous helicopter water crash training which resulted in a near-drowning incident. This, coupled with various other training and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)-specific events, marked the onset of progressive and increasingly noticeable symptoms of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Over time, these symptoms have become chronic, persistently affecting my daily life. The challenges I continued to grapple with, up until a month ago, include difficulty concentrating, unpredictable mood swings, persistent ringing in my ears, hearing loss heightened sensitivity to light, insomnia, debilitating migraines, significant anxiety and depression, as well as short-term memory loss. Currently, the primary therapeutic interventions for PTSD symptoms encompass Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) and Serotonin and Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs). While these treatments are generally effective, they may

be associated with mild to moderate side effects. These can range from gastrointestinal discomfort and increased perspiration to headaches and bouts of dizziness². In the management of Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs), medications such as Carbamazepine and Valproate are employed to control behavioral disorders. However, it's important to note that the full spectrum of their long-term effects remains under investigation and is not yet fully understood³. Since 2009, my journey with mental health has led me down a complex path of numerous prescriptions - over ten different types of SSRIs and SNRIs, as well as other medications. These treatments often felt like mere band-aids, offering temporary relief without addressing the root causes of my symptoms. In addition, I spent a decade participating in various forms of behavioral therapy, both group and individualized. Despite these experiences, a sense of true healing remained elusive, leading me to question if a long-term solution truly existed. The turning point arrived in 2020, when a combat-wounded, amputee Army Ranger reached out to our organization, Help Our Heroes. He was seeking assistance with room and board expenses, as well as meals, while undergoing Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) at the Hyperbaric Health and Wellness Foundation in Hailey, Idaho. This treatment was aimed at improving his gait and alleviating symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). At first glance, I considered his condition to be far more severe than mine. However, this prompted me to delve deeper into the potential benefits of HBOT. To my surprise, my research led me to realize that I, too, could be a suitable candidate for this innovative therapy. In 2021, I discovered a local facility, Restore Hyper Wellness, offering HBOT. This unexpected encounter enabled me to procure a prescription specifically catered to address my PTSD and TBI symptoms using their "soft-shelled" hyperbaric chamber. Understanding the potential benefits of this "soft-shelled" chamber in effectively treating my symptoms, I made a personal investment and completed a series of 30 dives. As I progressively underwent more HBOT sessions, I began to witness and experience tangible improvements. My mental clarity improved, leading to a notable decrease in brain fog. Anxiety and depression levels were significantly reduced. My comprehension abilities enhanced, migraines became manageable, mood swings less frequent, and overall, I experienced a surge in energy. Each dive brought me closer to wellness, proving that this investment was indeed a rewarding journey toward healing. However, after approximately 2 years, my wife and I began to observe a resurgence of the PTSD and TBI symptoms. This led me to delve deeper into research and engage in insightful discussions with leaders at TreatNow.org in July 2023. Through these interactions, I learned that "soft-shelled" hyperbaric chambers may not be as effective in fully healing damaged brain tissues as their "hard-shelled" counterparts. Moreover, it was brought to my attention that typically, individuals using HBOT for PTSD or TBI require between one to three treatment series before experiencing complete healing. Each series consist of 40 treatments or dives. About a month ago, I had the privilege of meeting the proprietor of the Hyperbaric Healing Institute, where I was offered therapy in a "hard-shelled" chamber. Upon commencing this new treatment regimen, I noticed a significant decline in my symptoms. My wife also observed further positive transformations, which were not as apparent with the "soft-shelled" chamber treatment, including improvements in my speech and a noticeable increase in motivation. I chronicled my HBOT journey on LinkedIn, providing others with a transparent view of the results and offering hope to veterans who may feel that there are limited options available for addressing their PTSD and TBI symptoms. This narrative serves not only as my personal testament but also as an inspirational beacon for others navigating similar health challenges. My symptoms post 17th HBOT treatment in a "hard shell" chamber: Following the initiation of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) within a robust "hard-shell" chamber, utilizing 100% oxygen at pressures of 1.5 to 2.0 ata for an uninterrupted duration of 60 minutes, there has been a remarkable transformation in my symptoms related to PTSD and TBI. From as early as the second session, the therapeutic benefits became evident. I found myself able to enjoy a full night's sleep without the aid of any medication. I feel more motivated in the morning to get out of bed and start my day. I have minimal to no anxiety or depression. I have found that if I have anxiety or depression, I can more easily management it through breathing exercises and meditation. My conversational skills have evolved noticeably. No longer do I find myself pausing mid-conversation, grappling to recall my train of thought. Social situations, once a source of anxiety and stress, have now become more manageable, allowing me to navigate public spaces with ease and confidence. Emotional stability has been another significant milestone. The frequency of mood swings has diminished considerably, and when they do occur, I find them far easier to manage. This newfound emotional equilibrium has fostered a deeper connection with my family, encouraging me to spend quality time with my children and wife rather than withdrawing into solitude. Physical activity has become a welcome part of my daily routine, replacing the inertia that once held me captive. And by the eleventh session, another unexpected benefit surfaced - the joy of reading returned. For the first time in what feels like forever, I can not only read but also comprehend and enjoy literature once again. Moreover, I've noticed a substantial improvement in my organizational skills, enabling me to structure my life more effectively. This journey through HBOT therapy has been transformative, breathing new vitality into every aspect of my life thus far. I have provided you with 2 RightEye exams and a personal testimonial from one of the Veterans that

reached out to Help Our Heroes asking for help in his journey to receiving HBOT. I respectfully urge this esteemed committee to lend its full endorsement to House Bill (HB) 2215. I further implore the distinguished representatives of the great state of Missouri to affirm this crucial legislation. This bill represents not just a piece of legislation, but a lifeline for our brave brothers and sisters in the armed forces. They have selflessly served our nation, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure they have expansive resources to address their mental health challenges. Thank you for your time and for taking my testimonial into account. Very respectfully, Blake Richardson, MHA,
USMCblake@helpourheroes.org 913-605-2747 109 Nelson Cir. Olathe, KS 66061
For me and the veterans I have advocated for since 2019, these medications have little affect and most end up having Sources:
1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8700773/> # 2.
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand_tx/meds_for_ptsd.asp 3.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877065715005540?via%3Dihub>



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: DALE LUTZEN		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: dlutzen@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2024 2:31 PM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.
Testimony to support HB 2215 "Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment and Recovery Act"



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: STEVEN SKAGGS, D.C.		PHONE NUMBER: 417-437-5576	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SKAGGS CHIROPRACTIC, LLC		TITLE: CHIROPRACTIC PHYSICIAN	
ADDRESS: 1802 WEST 32ND SUITE D			
CITY: JOPLIN		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64804
EMAIL: drskaggs@skaggschiro.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2024 4:37 PM	

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I am Dr. Steven Skaggs, I am a chiropractic physician in Joplin that provides hyperbaric Oxygen therapy (HBOT) to veterans with traumatic head injuries and PTSD sustained during combat. My office furnishes these services for free to our veterans. We have been treating service members for 12 years and have saved numerous lives and marriages. We have enabled service members to return to gainful employment making them a tax payer instead of a recipient. We recently had a service member referred to us by his mother, I was called on a Sunday evening and told the veteran had threatened to blow his head off in front of his daughter and wife. He had had two Humvees blown up by IEDs, while in the middle east, out of work and unable to keep any employment due to anger management issues due to the TBI. PTSD may him hypervigilant, aggressive and unable to sleep for any length of time. Nightmares were rapid! His mother ask if we could work him in to out HBOT schedule, he treated for the first time the following day and everyday for three weeks. Then as suddenly as he fell off the schedule he reappeared. Stopping by the office, he announced that he was gainfully employed, divorce proceedings had been terminated, he was sleeping for 5-6 hours at a time. He still had some fear of being in crowds but to a lesser degree. This is a simple case of what hyperbaric oxygen therapy can do for a veteran. And that is just one person that did not pull the trigger. According to National Veteran Suicide Prevention reporting there is some 2-4 suicides per day of our service members. I consider that number to be a low estimate because of the way some states tally the results. I can not save the entire veteran population of Missouri, but if I can save one life, I did my job! Help me help more! Make hyperbaric oxygen therapy available to our veterans, the State of Oklahoma did 7 years ago. We in Missouri can do it better! I would honored to provide expert testimony on and for the behalf of veterans, they deserve all the care they can get!



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: WILLIAM WISNER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/27/2024 12:00 AM
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