

Testimony of Andrew J. Fitzpatrick in support of LD542, An Act to Provide Support Services for Military Members Transitioning to Civilian Life in Maine.

I was born in Boston, MA in 1987 and grew up in Westwood, MA. I attended Norwich University in Vermont, and graduated in 2010. My Army career started in 2011 as a 2nd Lieutenant, where I branched Military Intelligence with a detail in Field Artillery. I was stationed in Georgia, Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona, Tennessee, and deployed to Jordan and Iraq. I spent nine years on active duty, and I'm currently serving in the Maine National Guard.

When I considered separating from the Army, it wasn't easy deciding where to live afterwards. My wife is from Illinois, and neither of us wanted to move back to where we grew up. We decided we wanted to move to the east coast, and considered New England. After researching what Maine had to offer, we decided to focus our efforts on moving there.

I reached out to Boots2Roots in 2019, roughly 18 months prior to separating from the Army. I was deployed at the time, and knowing that my family and I wanted to move to Maine, my wife told me about an organization called "Boots2Roots" who helps transitioning service members seek employment in the state of Maine. I inquired about it, and within a week Jen Fullmer and I started a dialogue. B2R was very accommodating to my schedule while I was deployed, and we would have a phone call once a month to work on my resume. For any service member, trying to translate what you did in the military in order for a civilian employer to fully comprehend it can be a little challenging. B2R helped tailor my resume to the job I was applying for, while still highlighting my accomplishments in the military. Multiple employers commented on how impressive my resume was, and I contribute that to B2R's help and guidance.

Boots2Roots also helped my wife with her resume, and with all of the connections B2R developed with employers throughout the state, my wife was able to secure a job with an outstanding accounting firm in Portland. But resume building wasn't the only thing B2R supported us with. They connected us with a realtor who supported us with multiple trips from Tennessee to Maine in order to house hunt and conduct job interviews. I can't even begin to explain how helpful that was for us.

Whenever my wife or I had a question about a company or about what area to live, Boots2Roots could answer it on the spot, or they reached out to their vast connection pool to find out, which typically yielded another connection. Since we're not originally from Maine, B2R introduced us to other B2R members who were able to tell us about the area, or who worked in a similar career field and could give helpful information you wouldn't be able to find elsewhere. B2R keeps all their teammates involved and up to date on job openings through daily and weekly emails, which is helpful to anyone who might be unsure on what they want to do when they leave the military.

We moved to Maine on April 1st, 2020. In the height of the pandemic, having to move my entire family from Tennessee to Maine was stressful, to say the least. But knowing we had a place to live and jobs lined up assured us we were going to be just fine. My wife and I were employed two months prior to us even moving to Maine. I was able to take 65 days of terminal leave, settle into our home, and start my new job all before my actual ETS date.

As I am writing this, it has been almost a year since moving here. My wife and I are still employed, and we love what Maine has to offer. Both of us have thought back to a year ago and where we were at the time, and how grateful we are that Boots2Roots was there to help with our transition.

Andrew J. Fitzpatrick