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Testimony of Rep. Jon Connor Supporting
**LD 658, “An Act To Provide Funding for 3 Veterans Services Officers
in the Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services”**
March 15, 2021

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

My name is Jon Connor and I proudly represent House District 58, which is part of Lewiston.

This morning I am honored to come before this committee with my steadfast support for LD658, An Act To Provide Funding for 3 Veterans Services Officers in the Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services.

As a retired Air Force veteran, I have personally witnessed the hard work and dedication of our state VSOs in their efforts to help me navigate the murky waters of the VA. Their schedules were always full, they work long hours, and maintained complete and accurate records on the hundreds of active veterans’ cases they were working on. Their professionalism helped me and I am forever grateful to them for it.

In addition to being a veteran that utilized the services of our VSOs, for a very brief time, I was also one of them. For a short time in 2017, I was a traveling VSO for MVS so I speak from personal experience regarding this bill. During my time with the Bureau, I felt like I could never catch up with the number of veterans needing help. I felt like there were never enough hours in the day and I was constantly just treading water and not helping our veterans as I should. I remember asking myself back then, “Why doesn’t the state hire more VSOs, why are there not more officers to help all of these veterans?”

My testimony today doesn’t go into the details and minutia of adding these positions. I do not know the numbers associated with adding these positions. I can’t quantify the dollar amount that adding these positions will cost in correlation to the amount of federal dollars in VA compensation and pensions that will be brought to the state. All I can do today, is ask on behalf of the thousands of veterans that call Maine home, as well as the outstanding and overworked VSOs currently serving those veterans, that you support all of them by supporting this bill.

Thank you for your time, I urge the Committee's favorable consideration.