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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Helping Veterans with Emergency Medical Training
Transition to Civilian Service”
Subcommittee on Health
July 11, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today’s hearing.

Among the United States’ finest citizens are the members of our military. And not just because they are prepared to put their lives on the line -- and often do -- to protect our homeland and national interests, and to stand up for the guiding principles upon which our great country has been built. This goes without saying.

We also count them among our best and brightest because of the tremendous skills and significant work experience they bring back to civilian life once their military obligation is completed. In every regard, then, these extraordinary Americans truly are all that they can be.

Because they deserve it -- and because they have earned it -- we should do everything we can to ensure that armed services personnel can move from their military jobs to civilian jobs if and when they want to. And they should be able to do so with relative ease and timeliness. This is a moral obligation we bear as a nation. And, indeed, through the GI Bill and other related initiatives, we have worked to fulfill that duty.

Efforts to further improve this transition make good business sense as well, especially for medical professionals who have served in the military. They have the training. They have the know-how. And they have the commitment -- all to provide needed medical services and to help fill the gaps in areas where shortages in the health professions exist -- right here at home.

But making the shift to the civilian workforce is not always as smooth or as quick as we would like or think it should be.

Today we will learn about the challenges facing one such group -- veterans with emergency medical training -- when they try to put that training to use as civilians after their

discharge. Reports indicate that many road blocks -- such as state licensure laws and continuing education requirements -- stand in their way.

Legislation was passed in the House during the last Congress to address these concerns. Congresswoman Capps has championed the cause in this Congress with the introduction of her bill, H.R. 3884, the Emergency Medic Transition Act. More recently, Ms. Capps has joined forces with our Republican colleague, Congressman Kinzinger, to introduce H.R. 4124, the Veteran Emergency Medical Technician Support Act.

I am hopeful that by working together, we can take a bill through the Congress that this time goes all the way to the President's desk for his signature.

But first things first. Today's hearing is the initial step in that process. I thank our witnesses for being here and look forward to a thoughtful and productive hearing.